

BLOOMSBURY



# WRITING CHALLENGE

Teacher Notes and Activities

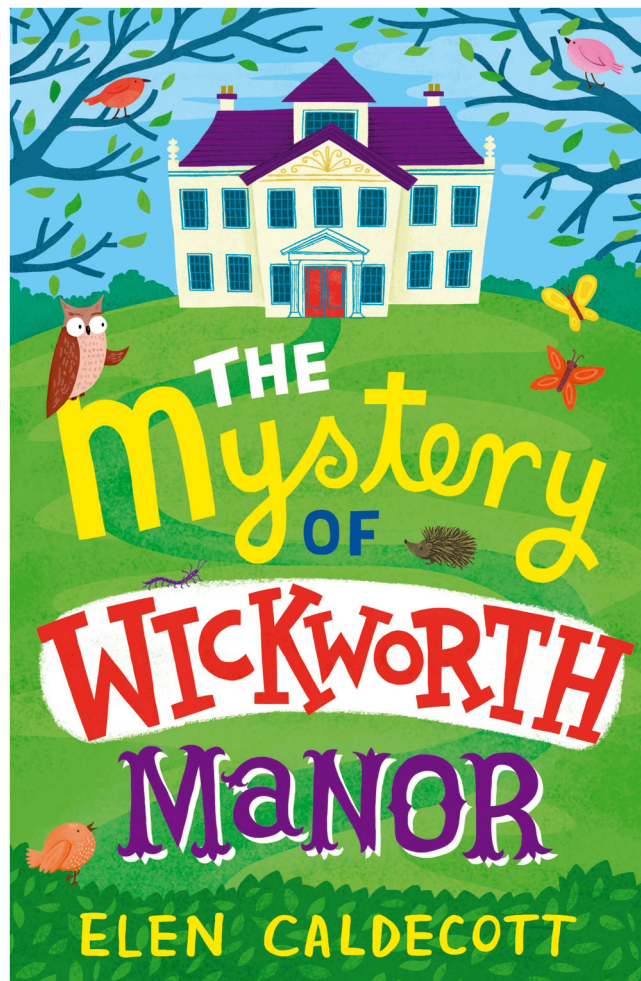
# The Mystery of Wickworth Manor

## Teacher Notes and Activities

This resource has been designed by teachers to support the development of Reading and Writing skills at Year 6. National Curriculum links are highlighted where relevant.

The aim of the resource is to develop creative writing skills inspired by the book, 'The Mystery of Wickworth Manor', by Elen Caldecott.

In a series of four short videos, the author reads extracts from her book and sets a series of challenges along the way, finishing with the challenge, 'Now it is time to write your own mystery'. Supporting activities are designed to help pupils explore settings, objects and characters, and to structure their story.



## Let's begin!

Watch each of the four videos in turn and complete the first 3 challenges set by the author.

### Video 1: Chapter 1 – page 35.

#### Reading Extract:

*'Spirits can you hear us? Give us a sign.'* (Page 33) ... *'What on earth is going on here?' a voice said.* (Page 34))

**Author's Challenge 1:** 'I would like you to read up to this point in the story and then imagine who has walked into the room? Think about what new character you would introduce into the story and write what you think happens next?'

### Video 2: Chapter 8 – Chapter 20

#### Reading Extract: All of Chapter 12

**Author's Challenge:** 'I would like you to research into slavery. Find out for yourself what it would have felt like to be a boy on a ship travelling to freedom in new land ... leaving slavery but also your family behind. You might not like what you discover but this will help you understand what some children, who are refugees are going through today.'

### Video 3: Chapter 8 – Chapter 20 – Chapter 29

**Reading Extract:** *'Page felt one side of the leg drop open.'* (P 131)... *'No one would know they had ever been there.'* (P132)

**Author's Challenge:** 'I would like you to write a secret letter. You could begin your letter with the words: *'to whosoever finds this letter'*. You can write about something you have read in my story or make up your own secret. End your letter with, *'I am ready to relinquish this life and submit to judgment in the next. Amen.'*

### Video 4: Chapter 29 – End

**Reading Extract:** *'This was going to be dangerous.'* (P157)... *'Forget it – its not happening.'* (P 158)

**Author's Challenge:** Well, we have reached my final challenge.... and here it is. Once you have finished reading *The Mystery of Wickworth Manor* I would like you to write your very own mystery. Your teacher has lots of ideas to get you started...

Once pupils have finished reading the book teachers might like to try the following two Extension Activities.



## Extension Activity 1: Figures of Speech

In this activity pupils revisit the *Mystery of Wickworth Manor* to find figures of speech and use these to create a classroom display to support their writing.

- Ask pupils to look at the first 3 chapters in detail. Search for simile | metaphor | personification | figurative language | adjective/adverb use | short sentences for effect.
- Make a list and use as part of a classroom display to support 'Mystery' writing task. E.g effects used to create description and tension

### NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINK: Reading comprehension -

1. Discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader,
2. Provide reasoned justifications for their views.



## Extension Activity 2: Letter Writing (ref. Chapter 7)

In this activity pupils practice letter-writing skills.

Imagine you are Page or Curtis.

- Write a reasoned letter to Mrs Burton Jones to get yourself out of trouble.
- Write a letter home explaining why your parents got a phone call home telling them of your misdemeanours

### NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINK: Writing composition -

1. Plan their writing by identifying the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing as models for their own
2. Noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary
3. In writing narratives, considering how authors have developed characters and settings in what pupils have read, listened to or seen performed

## Time to Write

Explain to pupils that they are going to embark on a series of activities that will help them to write their own mystery. The mystery will be set in and around a large old house situated in the wild remote landscape of Northumberland.

We have been given permission by the National Trust to use a series of photographs taken at Cragside, the Northumberland home of Lord Armstrong. Although the pupils' stories will be fictitious, the photographs will help pupils visualise settings, characters and objects and offer experiences that will enrich their writing.

## Extended Learning Opportunity

Lord Armstrong was a fascinating character in his own right and teachers may wish to extend learning to include Science and Design Technology. Cragside was the home of Lord Armstrong from 1863 until his death in 1900.

Lord Armstrong was born in 1810 in Newcastle, but spent much of his childhood visiting the rocky moorland of Northumberland. Cragside was built by Lord Armstrong as a small country lodge, from the profits of his armaments company. In 1863 Lord Armstrong decided to make Cragside his permanent home, extending the building to become the grand mansion with an observatory and a scientific laboratory.

Lord Armstrong was an inventor, a scientist and a philanthropist and his home Cragside was full of his inventions. Cragside was the first house **in the world** to be lit by hydroelectric power. It was the first private residence to have a vacuum cleaner, dishwasher and a washing machine. Cragside has sometimes been labeled as the very first 'Smart Home'!

Why not visit Cragside as part of your studies and see the interiors and artefacts for yourself.

Contact: Carole Evans National Trust Learning Officer, Cragside Tel:

## It's a Mystery!

- Explain to pupils that they are going to embark on a series of activities that will help them to write their own mystery.

Consider giving pupils a special notebook or folder in which they can keep their work – just like an author would have a notebook to jot down ideas.



## Writing Activity 1: Arrival

In this activity pupils write a beginning to their story.

- Give each pupil a piece of paper or notebook.
- Share the photograph **House exterior 1** on the whiteboard.
- Explain that you are going to ask a series of questions. After each question ask pupils to write down their thoughts. Pupils do not have to write in sentences and at this stage pupils should not worry about spelling. The aim of the activity is to capture ideas.

*Where are you standing?*

*Why are you there?*

*Where have you come from?*

*How do you feel?*

*Are you alone? Is someone with you – who?*

*What is the weather like?*

*What can you hear?*

*Describe what you see in front of you (general).*

*Describe one detail you can see.*

- Share pupils' ideas and responses.
- Ask pupils to revisit, re-order and redraft their responses into a paragraph.

These notes can be kept and referred to later when they compose their stories.

### NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINK: Writing composition -

1. Noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary
2. In writing narratives, considering how authors have developed characters and settings in what pupils have read, listened to or seen performed
3. Draft and write by selecting appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning
4. Using further organisational and presentational devices to structure text and to guide the reader [for example, paragraphing and underlining]



## Writing Activity 2: Scene Setting

In this activity pupils make and share responses to a range of photographs that they can use as part of their story. The activity helps pupils to visualise and 'experience' rooms or settings in and around the house, extending descriptive vocabulary.

This activity uses the same format as Activity 1.

Use the photographs in the gallery:

Kitchen | Pond | Owl Bedroom | Drawing Room | Attic Room | House Exterior 2

Working in groups: Give 1 photograph per group.

- Give each pupil a piece of paper (or notebook).

Where are you standing?

What is under your feet?

Are you alone? Is someone with you – who?

What do you feel like?

What is the weather like – (the temperature or atmosphere of the room if inside)?

What can you hear?

Describe what you see in front of you (general).

Describe one detail you can see.

- Ask the pupils to share their responses. Explain that they can make notes about words or ideas that they might like.
- Take some time to revisit and redraft ideas.

These notes can be kept and referred to later when they compose their stories.

### NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINK: Writing composition -

1. Noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary
2. In writing narratives, considering how authors have developed characters and settings in what pupils have read, listened to or seen performed
3. Draft and write by selecting appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning

Teachers might like to make a display of some of the pupils' responses alongside the photographs. Pupils can refer to the display when they come to write their stories.

## Writing Activity 3: All Wrapped Up

In this activity pupils explore objects that have something special about them. Pupils collect and share words and ideas about the objects.

Collect a small range of interesting objects and artefacts that you might find in an old house.

old clock | hat | painting | ornament | painted ceramics | carved animal

Wrap each artefact up in brown paper or tissue paper. Hand out one object per group of pupils.

- Explain that these objects have something special about them. *What could that be?*
- In groups, discuss the object. *Why is it significant?*
- *Where might this object have been found in the house?*
- 'Hot-seat' one of the group holding the object and ask pupils to ask questions.
- Collect ideas and ask each group to present their ideas back to the class.

These notes can be kept and referred to later when pupils compose their stories.

### NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINK: Speaking and Listening -

1. Give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including expressing feelings.
2. Maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments.





## Writing Activity 4: Mystery Objects

In this activity pupils explore the idea of a mystery using photographs of unusual objects collected by Lord Armstrong and exhibited in his home.

- Explain to pupils that they are now going to look at some objects that are in the old house.
- Working in small groups consider the question, 'What is a Mystery?'

Something out of place

Something not quite right

Something hidden

Something discovered

Something containing a letter or an object

- Share pupil responses.
- Introduce pupils to the four photographs of mystery objects from the house. Give one group a photograph each or share the four photographs on the whiteboard:

Birds and insect in dome

Oil painting of child

Dolls in bedroom

Golden box

- Working in groups discuss your mystery object(s):

*What is it?*

*Who does it belong to?*

*How old is it?*

*How did it come to be in the house?*

- Ask pupils to discuss what could the mystery be around their object. Ask each group a specific question:

*Why does the box have figures holding it up? (This is a cigar box and the figures are tobacco plantation slaves but do not tell pupils this until they have considered the object for themselves.)*

*Why are such strange birds in a glass dome with a beetle?*

*Why do you think there are references to hunting in this oil painting? (Notice the chain attached to the hawk's foot – pheasant feathers in the cap – and the fox/dog/badger head.)*



*What is the significance of the two dolls placed on a chair in an adult bedroom? (Notice the sharp thorns on the wallpaper.)*

- You are looking at the object and you notice it moves ... describe what happens.
- Discuss ideas in groups and share with the class. Ask pupils to make notes about the ideas they might like to use in their story.

These notes can be kept and referred to later when pupils compose their stories.

**NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINK: Speaking and Listening -**

1. Use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas.
2. Consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others.



## Writing Activity 5: Talking About Objects

In this activity pupils listen carefully to each other and speak clearly using words to describe a natural or manmade object. This activity develops vocabulary through sensory experiences.

acorn | branch of leaves | bulrush | stone carving | birds nest | flower | trowel | fir cone

Working in groups of three:

- Do not let pupils see the objects (you might need to put them in bags).
- Sit two pupils back to back. Give one pupil an object. Give the other partner a board and a pencil.
- Ask the pupil with the object to describe the object without saying what it is. Ask the other partner to draw what they think is being described.
- Ask the third pupil to scribe descriptive words.

Teachers may like to use these drawings and words as part of a classroom display.

### NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINK: Speaking and Listening -

1. Use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas.
2. Consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others.



## Writing Activity 6: The Golden Box

In this activity pupils focus on the Golden Cigar Box on Lord Armstrong's table in the drawing room. They explore the object in detail and relate its significance to the slave trade.

The slaves depicted holding up the box would have been a depiction of slaves working on tobacco plantations. Lord Armstrong was 23 years old when the Abolition of Slavery was passed.

*What are the implications of such an object?*

*Do you think this cigar box is a celebration of or a comment against slavery?*

Lord Armstrong was an abolitionist. This means he was against slavery. Ask pupils to research when slavery was abolished in this country.

### Extended Learning Opportunity

There are still 12.3 million slaves in our world today and teachers may wish to take the opportunity to explore slavery in more detail and extend learning into Citizenship / PSHE.

School360 'Black History' resource focuses on the reality that slavery was supported by wealthy families, ship owners and traders across the northeast of England. Manufacturers of the manacles and chains used to bind slaves include Gateshead Iron Works.

The following website is designed to support Year 6 pupils.

<http://www.understandingslavery.com>

'Four units are provided for teachers explore some of the key areas of knowledge and understanding that young children need to have in order to make sense of transatlantic slavery. The units are designed to be easily adaptable by any teacher and can be applied across a whole school if desirable. Each unit follows a 'Learning Cycle' and is supported by objects and video clips from this site, as well as recommended books to use in class.

In North America, the British turned to slavery for the cultivation of tobacco on plantations clustered around the Virginia, which provided an easy maritime route to Europe and, increasingly, to the centre of the tobacco trade in Glasgow. By 1750, some 145,000 enslaved Africans worked in the region.'

- Ask pupils to write an explanation of the golden box, considering the questions and information given above. Structure writing using organizational features such as headings, subheadings, bullet points. Pupils can write in the present tense and in the past tense accordingly.

**NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINK: Writing composition -**

1. Noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary.
2. Using further organisational and presentational devices to structure text and to guide the reader [for example, headings, bullet points, underlining]
3. Ensuring the consistent and correct use of tense throughout a piece of writing



## Writing Activity 7: Developing Characters

In this activity pupils begin to consider characters they might like to include in their stories. They refer back to the *Mystery of Wickworth Manor* to understand how an author introduces and builds characters.

100 years ago such a large house would have had lots of servants. *How is a servant different from a slave?*

Following the First World War people were reluctant to continue as servants and many of the large houses could no longer afford to employ lots of staff.

As this story is set in the present day there will be only a few people employed to look after a large house:

cook | gardener | housekeeper | home owner | chauffeur / handyman

Explain to the pupils that they are going to explore some characters that could be in their story.

Refer back to the book *Mystery of Wickworth Manor* and look at how the author introduces and then builds a character.

### Learning from experience

Looking at clothes, textures and patterns of fabrics help pupils understand the importance of detail to add interest and depth to the characters.

Offer pupils a range of clothes to look at / wear that might have been worn by characters living in the old house.

shoes and slippers | a suit | costume jewellery | hats | scarves | rubber, leather, gardening and woollen gloves | apron

- Hot seat in role as a story character. *What is your name? Do you own the house? What do you do? Do you live at the house? Where? Do you work there? Do you like your job?*
- Extend questions further. *What do you like to do in your spare time? Do you have a family? Do you have a pet? Do you have children? What are you wearing today? What accent do you speak with?*
- Ask pupils to write a character profile of a fictitious servant with good clear descriptions of what they look like and what they wear.
- Evaluate and edit their profile further after discussion with partners.

## NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINK: Writing composition -

1. Noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary
2. In writing narratives, considering how authors have developed characters and settings in what pupils have read, listened to or seen performed
3. Using further organisational and presentational devices to structure text and to guide the reader [for example, headings, bullet points, underlining]
4. Evaluate and edit by assessing the effectiveness of their own and others' writing



## Writing Activity 8: Look into My Eyes

In this activity pupils look beyond the surface and explore as to what a character believes and feels. They create a colour key to match emotional qualities.

On the whiteboard make a list of descriptive words to describe how a person 'is' rather than what they look like.

sensitive | caring | arrogant | fearful | selfish | humorous | kind | mean | carefree

Give these character traits a colour. Explain to pupils that this is a colour key that they will refer to in the following activity.

- Explain to pupils that they are going to draw the eyes of a fictitious character using their friend's eyes as a model.
- Draw the eyes at least four times larger than normal.
- Make a list of your character's traits that appear on the colour key. Colour in the character's eyes according to the colour key, deciding on the proportion of a particular trait, e.g. someone who is mainly kind (pink) may have mainly pink eyes with a small fleck of green (selfish).

### NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINK: Writing composition and PVG -

1. Using expanded noun phrases to convey complicated information concisely
2. Draft and write by selecting appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning





## Writing Activity 9: What is My Role?

In this activity pupils develop their characters further. Pupils create an advert and job description and respond with a letter.

This is an opportunity for role-play and use various forms of writing:

Letter | Job Description | Job Advert

- Explain to pupils that they are the owner of a large house and that they are going to write a job advert for a vacant position.

Work in five groups and give each group a character role.

Gardener | Housekeeper | Cook | Chauffeur | Handyman

- Ask pupils to discuss what skills, experience and character traits the person they are looking for might need.
- Write a short advert. Explain that pupils will need to be specific as adverts in local newspapers are often paid for per word. They will need to keep sentences short and succinct.

### Interviews

- Swap the adverts around the groups and ask each group to reply to the advert.
- In groups consider the kinds of things you might say in response to the 'person specification'.
- Working in pairs or as small groups role-play interview scenarios. The interviewer will need to prepare questions. Each person interviewed will have to give some thought about what they want to say to get the job.

*Who gets the job? Why have they been chosen?*

## NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINK: Writing composition and PVG -

1. Plan their writing by identifying the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing as models for their own
2. Draft and write by selecting appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning
3. Ensuring correct subject and verb agreement when using singular and plural, distinguishing between the language of speech and writing and choosing the appropriate register
4. Proof-read for spelling and punctuation errors
5. Using passive verbs to affect the presentation of information in a sentence
6. Using the perfect form of verbs to mark relationships of time and cause



## Writing Activity 10: Developing the Mystery

In this activity pupils use the Activity Sheets 10A, 10B and 10C to make a set of cards for characters, objects and settings.

Pupils can extend the collection of cards using their own drawings to include additional objects and a set of characters.

### Characters:

gardener | housekeeper | teacher | Lady of the Manor | child (boy) | child (girl) | cook

### Lets Begin

#### Plan out your story

- Explain to pupils that they can use their cards to plan their story.

*Who is telling the story? Are you going to use the first person or tell your story from another point of view?*

*Who is going to be in your story?*

*What rooms are you going to use in your story?*

*What is going to be your mystery object? Where in the house does your object belong?*

- Lay out cards in the order of events, introduction of characters and objects etc. This can be in a linear fashion or in a different shape to become a storyboard of events in their story.
- Alternatively use the **Activity Sheet 10D**: Story Mountain to help pupils to plan their stories.

Teachers could combine both of the above ideas and give pupils blank pieces of paper and their 'character and settings cards and ask them to create their own story mountain using the formula of beginning leading up to a climax and then back down toward a resolution.

## Extension Activity

Pupils might like to create their own 'Cluedo' type game using their own characters, objects and settings.

### Time to Write a Mystery!

Explain to pupils that it is time to start the first draft of their mystery.

- Refer back to notes from other activities.
- Use the paragraph for the 'arrival' activity to start your story.



- Refer to the photographs: House exterior 1; House exterior 2 and the Bunkroom to extend ideas.

## Starting Off

To make the first sentence more interesting, teachers may like to try the following activity:

Give each group a letter e.g. T | F | D | M (any letters will do)

- Ask pupils to make a list of words beginning with that letter
- Now write a sentence beginning with one of the words from your list to start your story.

E.g. friends | following | fog | feelings

Feelings of trepidation overpower me as I stand facing the old house that seems to float amongst the trees.

Following the long, winding path, I reach my destination. The huge gateway offers little welcome.

Fog sits deep in the trees muffling the laughter of my friends.

Friends! Who needs them?

- Remind pupils to refer back to their notes on story settings.

Once pupils have determined their first sentence they might like to use this technique at various points throughout their story.

## Progressing the story

Teachers might like to give pupils a list of prompts to help them move through the story as they move through the house.

*Describe entering the house – walking past the rooms – catching a glimpse*

*You find an object? Where? What is interesting about it? What story lies behind the object?*

*Meeting someone as you walk along the corridor – who ... what is the conversation... do you become friends?*

*Sharing the mystery - who is involved – whom do you meet – who do you avoid?*

*How might the story be relevant to the house? How will it be resolved? Will it ever be resolved?*



Many pupils may struggle to write a fully resolved Mystery, explain that you are looking for quality of writing rather than quantity. Remind pupils that some stories by authors end at a point where the mystery truly begins.

Give plenty of time to draft and redraft... as authors would do.

**NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINK: Writing composition and PVG -**

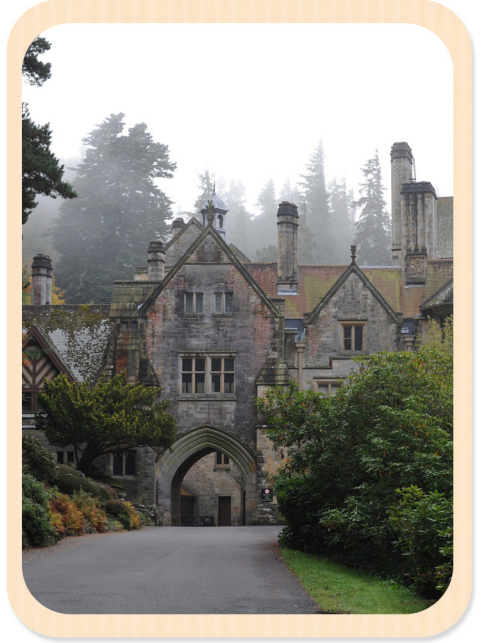
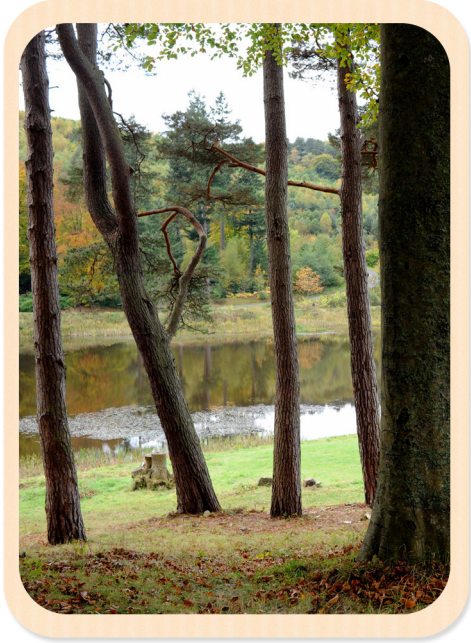
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**Why not visit Cragside as part of your studies and see the interiors and artefacts for yourself.  
Contact: Carole Evans National Trust Learning Officer [Carole.evans@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:Carole.evans@nationaltrust.org.uk)**

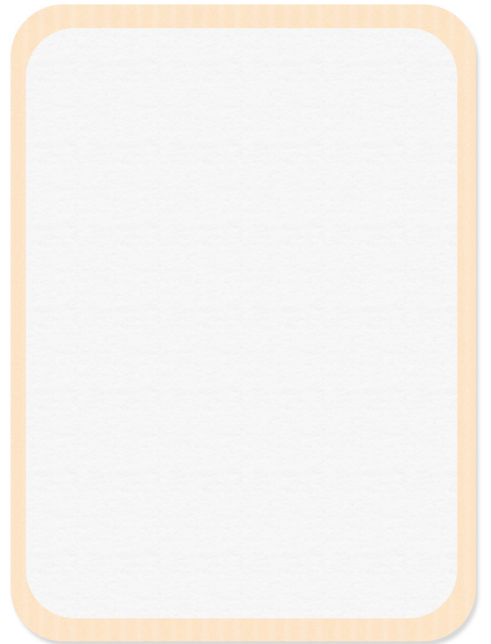
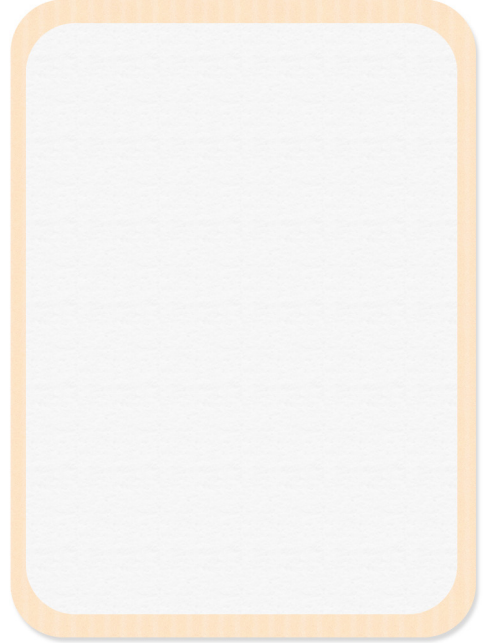
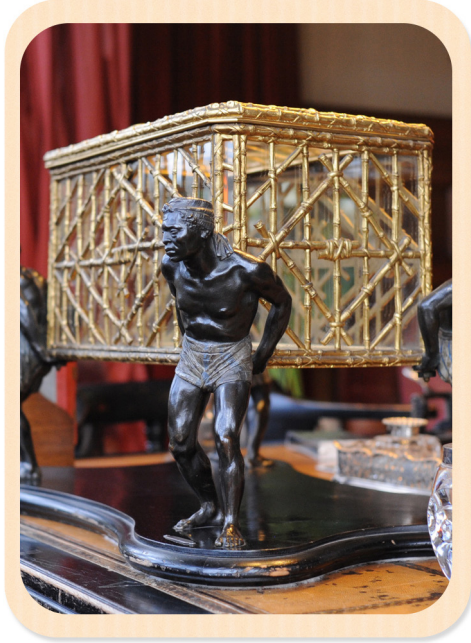
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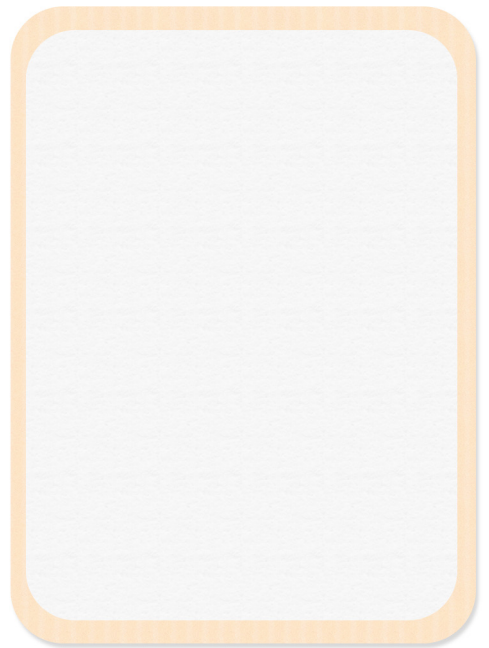
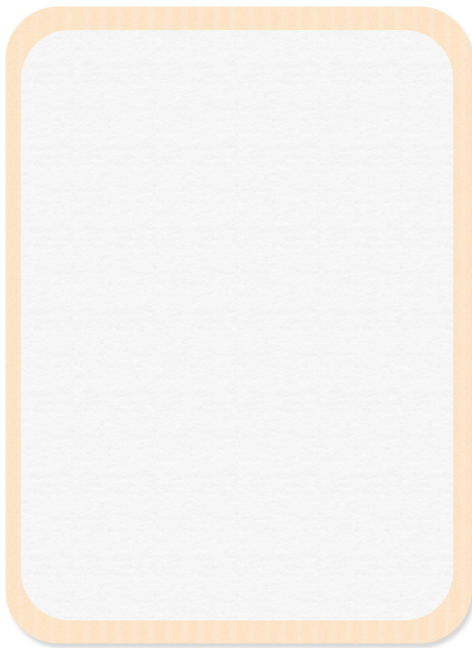
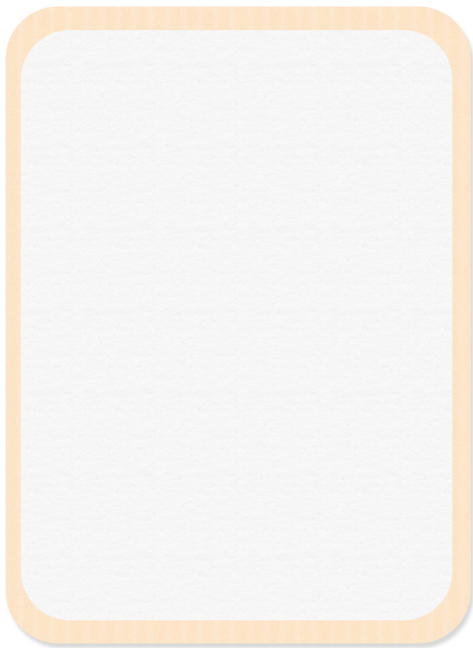
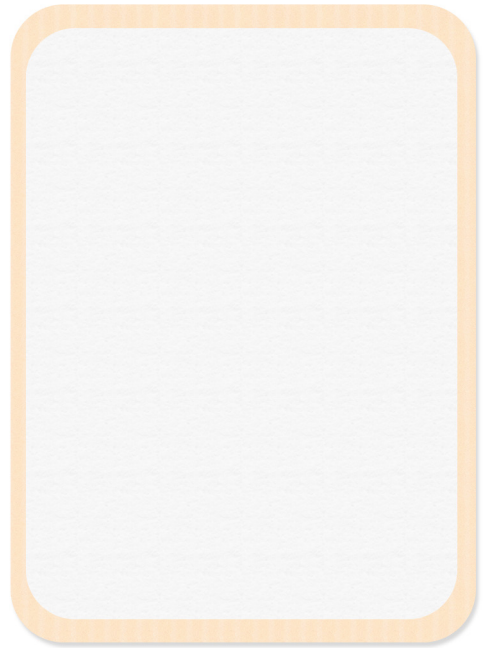
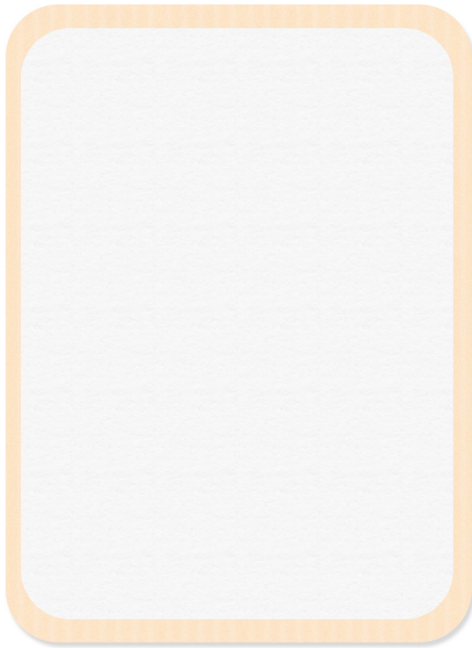
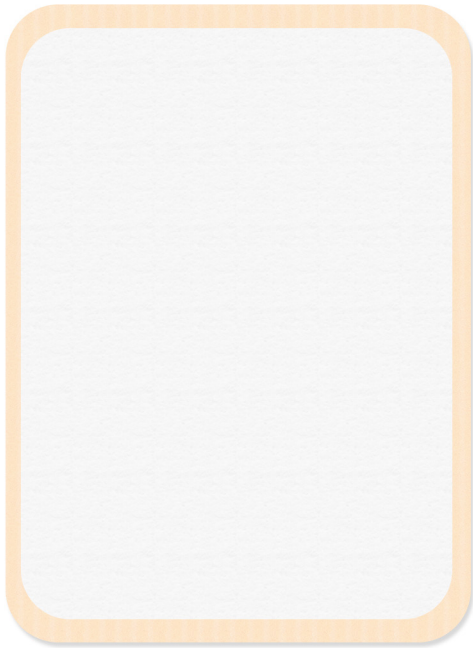
# Activity Sheet 10A – Settings



# Activity Sheet 10B – Objects



## Activity Sheet 10C – Characters





# Activity Sheet 10D – Story Mountain

