

A Curriculum Guide to

**Story Thieves, Book 2: *The Stolen Chapters***

By James Riley

**About the Book**

Bethany, Kiel, and Owen find themselves mired in a myriad of mysterious circumstances—all at the same time. Kiel and Owen’s memories have been zapped by magic, Kiel has lost his magic wand and spell book, and Bethany has been kidnapped. The mysteries deepen as a strange kid wearing a question mark mask burns down Owen’s mother’s library. But when Kiel and Owen are jailed for starting the fire, they are rescued by Moira—a girl they don’t even know. None of the three understand what is going on; all they know is that their lives are all in danger. If only Kiel and Owen could remember, then maybe they could determine a way out of the mess. But until then, who knows what could happen!

**Prereading Activity**

This activity aligns with the following Common Core State Standards: (W.4–6.8) (RL.7.8)

Ask students to investigate the fictional character Sherlock Holmes and his nemesis, Professor Moriarty. Each student should locate three facts about the fictional characters and their relationship to share with the class.

**Discussion Questions**

These questions align with the following Common Core State Standards: (L.4–7.1, 3) (SL.4–7.1)

1. Doyle says to Bethany, “Better to die with one’s reputation than to live without it.” Discuss this quote with students and ask them what Doyle was hoping to accomplish by saying it to Bethany.
2. The Magister states, “Truth is a sword with no hilt. We grab for it at our own peril, at times.” How can the truth be dangerous? What had Kiel just learned about himself that hurt him?
3. Why does Bethany jump into books despite the danger? How does she attempt to protect herself and the characters in the book?
4. In “Missing” Chapter 3, why is Bethany so concerned that she meets EarthGirl? Why does EarthGirl become upset with Bethany?
5. Why is Owen so upset with himself? On what does he base his opinion of himself? Is Owen justified in thinking negatively about his performance?
6. What are Bethany’s rules when she jumps into a book? How does she break them by talking to Doyle Holmes?

7. What do Bethany and Moira have in common? How is this relevant to the outcome of the story?
8. Why does Holmes frame Kiel and Owen for the fire in the library and capture Bethany? What would Holmes gain by having Kiel and Owen out of the picture? What does Holmes want from Bethany?
9. Why doesn't Bethany want Kiel and Owen to jump into *The Backstreet School for Irregular Children* with her? What is she hiding from them?
10. How does Owen finally determine that he and Kiel are operating in a fictional world parallel to his real world? How does knowing that help him?
11. How does Owen finally solve the mystery of Bethany's location? How does he save her?
12. What is the mystery surrounding the possible author of *The Stolen Chapters*, James Riley? How does Fowen plant the seed of doubt about the author's real identity?
13. What do Bethany, Owen, and Kiel hope to accomplish by breaking into the Baker Street School? What three things do they seek?
14. Why does Moira finally agree to help Kiel, Owen, and Bethany break into the Baker Street School? Why do they need Moira's expertise?
15. Why is Bethany willing to give up the search for her father? Who is she trying to protect if she continues to search for him?
16. What decision does Kiel make that affects Owen and Bethany? How do Bethany and Owen feel about Kiel's decision?
17. What does the fake Owen (Fowen) want from the real Owen? How does Fowen's attempt to steal what he wants then create a nightmare for Owen, Kiel, and Bethany?

### **Writing and Research Activities**

#### **Mysteries Abound**

This activity aligns with the following Common Core State Standards: (W.4–6.2) (RL.4–7.1) (RL.7.2) (L.4–7.1, 2)

*The Stolen Chapters* entails multiple mysteries, and the solutions seem to be evident several times, just as another clue is revealed. As a class, brainstorm the mysteries occurring simultaneously. Then divide students into groups, assigning each group one of the mysteries. Ask each group to trace the mystery from its inception to its solution and to list the clues in the order of their revelation. Then ask each group to write a creative and intriguing explanation of the mystery and to detail the way it was solved. Have groups share their explanations with the class.

### **Breaking and Entering**

This activity aligns with the following Common Core State Standards: (W.4–6.2) (RL.4–7.3) (RL.7.2) (L.4–7.1, 2)

Moira and Owen devise a foolproof plan to enter the Baker Street School without detection. With a partner, ask students to create a storyboard of the plan, including listing the unique supplies Bethany provides, the role each of the four friends will play, and how they will execute the plan. Then have students include on the storyboard the surprises the friends encounter while executing their plan. Post storyboards in the classroom.

### **Life Is a Mystery**

This activity aligns with the following Common Core State Standards: (W.4–7.1) (RL.4–7.1) (L.4–7.1, 2)

Doyle explains to Bethany that all lives are mysteries. Then he asks a series of three questions: (1) “What will we do at any given moment?” (2) “How far will we go to get what we want?” and (3) “Who will we sacrifice to save ourselves?” Ask students to answer these three questions from the point-of-view of one character. Then group the students according to their character selections and ask them to share their answers. Ask each group to share with the whole group three insights they glean about their character based on their individual responses to the questions and their small group discussions.

### **What’s It All About?**

This activity aligns with the following Common Core State Standards: (W.4–7.1) (RL.4–7.2) (L.4–7.1, 2)

With a partner, ask students to determine the theme or central idea of *The Stolen Chapters* and to discuss how it is conveyed through the actions of the characters and the details of the story. After writing their thematic statement, ask the partners to create a thematic poster that includes illustrations and quotes from the book that support the thematic statement. Display the posters in the classroom.

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