

THE GOOD THIEVES

TEACHING RESOURCE PACK

#TheGoodThieves

BLOOMSBURY 



Dear teachers and librarians,

This resource pack is based on *The Good Thieves*, the stunning new novel from the multiple-award-winning author of *The Explorer*, Katherine Rundell. The questions and activities within this pack are designed to encourage pupils to take their writing to the next level and become READING THIEVES. Created for use in KS2 lessons, these resources are perfect for classes of any ability in Years Five and Six.

The four extracts included within the pack have been taken directly from the text and are accompanied by corresponding discussion questions and cross-curricular activities that stimulate ideas around important themes from the story.

All of the material included is aimed at developing descriptive and creative writing at KS2, including: creating strong lead characters, writing settings, depicting relationships – and even planning a heist!

Your class's adventure with Katherine Rundell starts here ...

ABOUT THE BOOK

Vita set her jaw, and nodded at New York City in greeting, as a boxer greets an opponent before a fight.

Fresh off the boat from England, Vita Marlowe has a job to do. Her beloved grandfather Jack has been cheated out of his home and possessions by a notorious conman with Mafia connections. Seeing Jack's spirit is broken, Vita is desperate to make him happy again, so she devises a plan to outwit his enemies and recover his home.

She finds a young pickpocket, working the streets of the city. And, nearby, two boys with highly unusual skills and secrets of their own are about to be pulled into a lawless, death-defying plan.

Katherine Rundell's fifth novel is a heist as never seen before – the story of a group of children who will do anything to right a wrong.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katherine Rundell is the bestselling author of five children's novels, for which she has won the Costa Children's Book Award, the Blue Peter Book Award and the Waterstones Children's Book Prize amongst many others.

She spent her childhood in Africa and Europe before taking her degree at the University of Oxford and becoming a Fellow of All Souls College. As well as writing, she studies Renaissance literature, and is learning, as a direct result of writing *The Good Thieves*, to fly on the flying trapeze.



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CONTENTS

- **EXTRACT 1: Strong Lead Characters: Introducing Vita (taken from Chapter 1)**

Objectives: Infer Vita's personality traits from an extract; create a list of possible candidates to play Vita in a film version of the story, explaining choices; create a visual representation of a new character using string and yarn; describe a character.

Subjects: Literacy, Speaking & Listening, Drama, Design, Art & Technology

- **EXTRACT 2: Writing Settings: The Essence of Castle (taken from Chapter 18)**

Objectives: Identify sensory description in an extract from the story, describing why it is effective; use sensory description to describe a setting.

Subjects: Literacy, Speaking & Listening

- **EXTRACT 3: Depicting Relationships: Grandpa (taken from Chapter 3)**

Objectives: Identify how dialogue can depict a relationship between two characters; write dialogue between family members; act out dialogue in pairs.

Subjects: Literacy, Drama, PSHE, Speaking & Listening

- **EXTRACT 4: Planning a Heist (taken from Chapter 8)**

Objectives: Create a blueprint for a house by creating a technical sketch; write an informative summary of a blueprint; create a storyboard for a heist story using words and illustrations.

Subjects: Literacy, Design, Art & Technology, Geography

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EXTRACT 1: STRONG LEAD CHARACTERS: INTRODUCING VITA

(Taken from Chapter 1)

Vita set her jaw and nodded at the city in greeting, as a boxer greets an opponent before a fight.

She stood alone on the deck of the ship. The sea was wild and stormy, casting salt spray thirty feet into the air, and all the other passengers on the ocean liner, including her mother, had taken sensible refuge in their cabins.

But it is not always sensible to be sensible.

Vita had slipped away and stood out in the open, gripping the rail with both hands as the boat crested a wave the size of an opera house. So it was that she alone had the first sight of the city.

‘There she is!’ called a deck hand. ‘In the distance, port side!’

New York climbed out of the mist, tall and grey-blue and beautiful; so beautiful that it pulled Vita forwards to the bow of the boat to stare. She was leaning over the railing, as far out as she dared, when something came flying at her head.

She gasped and ducked low. A seagull was chasing a young crow across the sky, pecking at its back, wheeling and shrieking in mid-air. Vita frowned. It wasn’t, she thought, a fair fight. She felt in her pocket, and her fingers closed on an emerald-green marble. She took aim, a brief and angry calculation of distance and angle, drew back her arm, and threw.

The marble caught the seagull on the exact centre of the back of its skull. The gull gave the scandalised cry of an angry duchess, and the crow spun in the air and sped back towards the skyscrapers of New York.

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VOCABULARY

What is a synonym for 'refuge'?

What does 'wheeling' mean in the context of the extract?

Find a phrase that shows Vita knows how to throw things with accuracy.

Define 'scandalised'.



INFER

What characteristics do you think Vita has, judging from the opening line in the extract?

Why do you think Vita is on the deck by herself?

Can you find a phrase that suggests Vita doesn't follow the rules?

How can you tell that Vita has a strong sense of fairness?

Why does Vita decide to throw something at the seagull?

Do you think the fight between the two birds might be a metaphor for something? What?



RETRIEVE

Where is Vita? Where is she going?

Where are Vita's mother and all of the other passengers?

Why is Vita 'pulled' to the bow of the boat?

What comes flying towards Vita's head?

What does Vita throw at the seagull?

Does Vita hit the seagull? Where?

What happens to the crow?



EXPLAIN

What impression do you get of Vita?

Explain what happens between the seagull and the 'young crow'.



PREDICT

Predict why Vita might be on the ship sailing to New York.

Predict what sort of experience Vita will have in New York.

Predict whether Vita will like New York or not.



SUMMARISE

Summarise what happens in the extract in less than 50 words.



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ACTIVITY TIME!

CASTING VITA

Subjects: Literacy: Reading Comprehension & Inference, Speaking & Listening, Drama

- Using the extract, make a list of key words/phrases or adjectives to describe Vita. Write down all of your describing words on a sheet of A3 paper. Swap your words with the person next to you. Can you add any more words to your sheet?
- Imagine you have been asked to make *The Good Thieves* into a film. Who would you cast in the role of Vita?
- Write a list of possible candidates (at least five). Next to each candidate, make a list of reasons why you have chosen him or her. Consider how the actor matches up to some of the describing words that you have just written down.
- Narrow down your list to just two candidates. Imagine that you have asked both of these candidates to come in and act in-character as Vita. Which part of the extract would you give to them to act out? Why?
- Create a two-minute film trailer for the book in groups. Imagine it will be played at cinemas around the country. It should incorporate someone in the lead role as Vita, dialogue, action, sound effects and a suspenseful cliffhanger to make sure that the audience is captivated!

CREATING CHARACTERS

Subjects: Literacy: Descriptive Writing, Design, Art & Technology

- To remove the fear of making mistakes by committing pencil to paper, use lengths of different coloured string or yarn to complete this exercise. Start by choosing your piece of string or yarn.
- Start creating shapes on a white piece of A3 paper, simply by moving your length of string or yarn in different ways.
- Then, think about creating a character – how can you manipulate the shapes to show facial features, bodies, or even emotions?
- When you have created something you are happy with, take a photograph of your work, then sketch around the shapes that you have made in order to make a vague outline of your new character.
- Write a paragraph describing the character that you have created.
- Develop your outlines into sketches over time, adding more and more features and traits to your characters.

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EXTRACT 2: WRITING SETTINGS: THE ESSENCE OF CASTLE

(Taken from Chapter 18)

It looked like it had been designed by someone who had seen more castles in picture books than in the flesh; it looked like someone had sought the essence of *castle*.

The ornamental lake was edged with trees, the water blue-black. Rising on stone foundations from the middle of the water was a wall, and beyond the wall a garden, surrounding on three sides a great block of brick and stone.

The castle was topped with a single turret and battlements, silver-black in the moonlight. One wall of the castle dropped straight into the water, and its reflection glinted and shimmered, fairy-tale-like. Vita's whole body thrilled and shook at the sight of it. It was real.

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VOCABULARY

What does the word 'essence' mean in the context in which it is used?

Find a phrase that suggests the castle is highly decorative.

What is a 'turret'?

Define 'glinted'.

What does 'fairy-tale-like' mean?



INFER

What sort of person do you think designed the castle?

How big do you think the castle is? Why?

Do you think the castle is a friendly place?

What is the 'great block of brick and stone'?

Why do you think Vita is 'thrilled' by the sight of the castle?

How can you tell that Vita thinks that the castle is almost unreal?



RETRIEVE

What type of person does Vita think designed the castle?

What colour is the lake?

What surrounds the lake?

What rises out of the lake?

What surrounds the 'great block of brick and stone'?

Where is the 'single turret'?

What colour does the castle appear in the moonlight?



EXPLAIN

What are Vita's thoughts and feelings in the extract?

PREDICT

Predict why Vita might be at the castle.

Predict what sort of experience Vita will have in the castle.

Predict whether Vita will like the castle or not.



SUMMARISE

Summarise the castle's appearance in less than 50 words.



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ACTIVITY TIME!

STORY DICE SENSES

Subjects: Literacy: Reading Comprehension & Inference, Writing: Descriptive Writing, Speaking & Listening

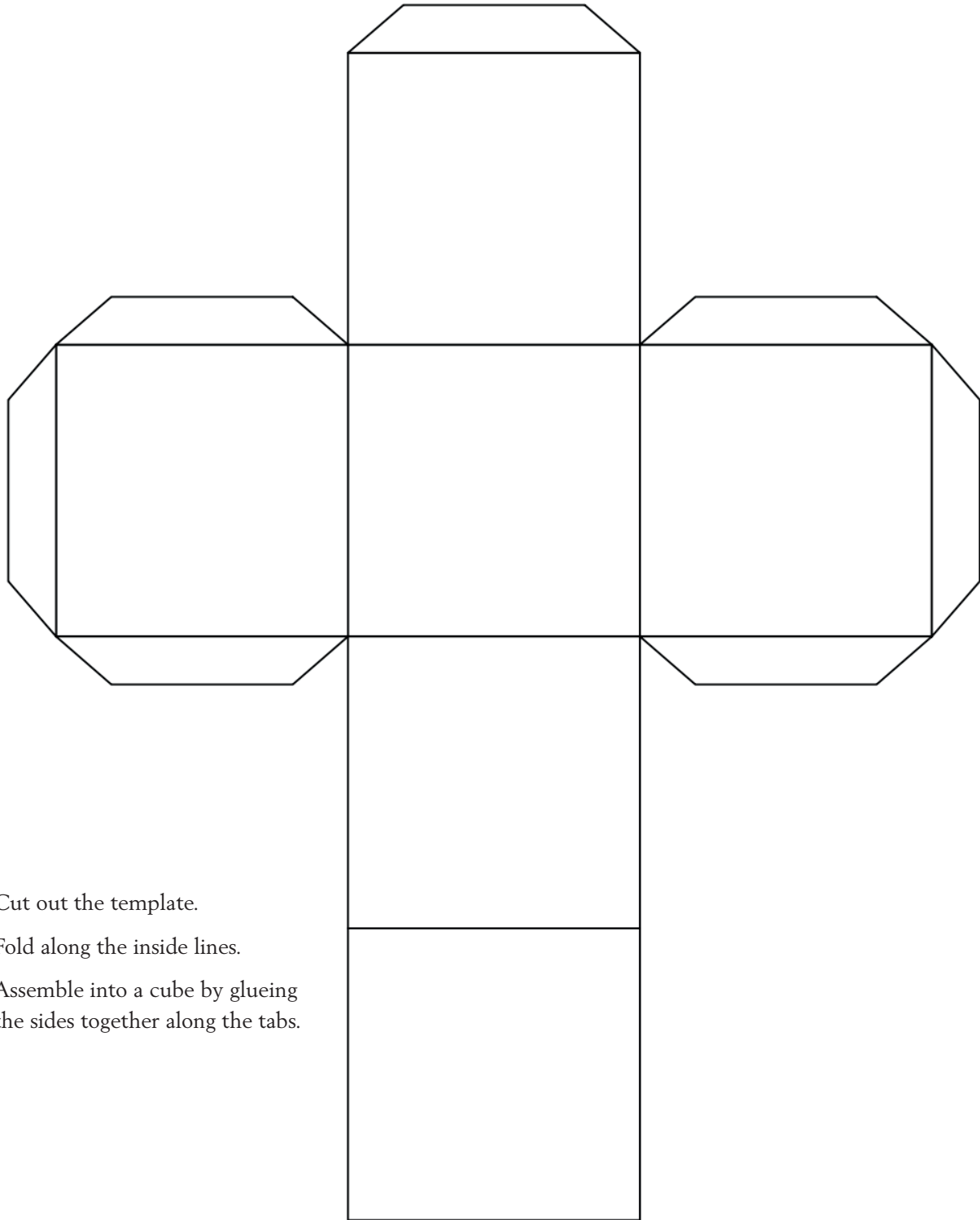
- Write each of the five senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste) on five different sheets of A4 paper. In pairs, make a list of key words/phrases or adjectives that appeal to the senses in the extract. Write down all of your key words/phrases on the corresponding sheet of A4 paper.
- Consider how each word or phrase that you have written down is effective. How does it make you feel? What does it make you think of? Can you draw the castle based on the description in the extract?
- Now, imagine a setting of your own. It can be a real place, a castle just like in the extract, or somewhere in your imagination. How would you use sensory description to write about your chosen setting? Using five new A4 sheets, note down any key words or phrases that you would use to evoke each of the five senses.
- Use your notes to write five possible sentences that you might use to describe the setting that you are thinking of (one for each of the senses). Write down a sentence on each side of the story dice template that is provided on the next page and add a sixth bonus sentence!
- Once you have cut out the dice and stuck it together, ask your partner to roll the dice. Can they match each of your sentences to the correct sense? Share your favourite sentences and suggestions with the class!

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1. Cut out the template.
2. Fold along the inside lines.
3. Assemble into a cube by glueing the sides together along the tabs.

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EXTRACT 3: DEPICTING RELATIONSHIPS: GRANDPA

(Taken from Chapter 3)

The day Grandpa and Grandma went back to America was the day I got my penknife.

I didn't want to watch them go, so I went to the woods to be alone. I was trying to hit a knot in a tree with a handful of stones, but I kept missing; I couldn't see.

A voice behind me said, 'Concentrate.'

And I said, 'I am!'

He said, 'You're sad, Rapsallion, and angry. I know. But if you can learn to transform anger and sadness into something – into work, into kindness – then you will be remarkable. Put your sadness and anger into your wrist, and throw it.'

'How?' I said. 'I don't see how.'

He said, 'It's a trick that takes a lifetime to learn. Try again. Imagine shifting your sadness out of your chest and into your hand. Throw.'

I tried. I pushed my heart down into my hand, and threw the stone, and I hit the knot, right in the middle of the tree. I turned round, and there he was, sitting on a tree stump and smiling. And he said, 'Close your eyes.'

And he put a red penknife into my hand.

He said, 'It was mine, when I was your age. It's called a Swiss Army knife. To remind you, you are an army unto yourself.'

I opened it. It was perfectly oiled. A long blade, scissors, a pair of detachable tweezers tucked into the top.

'Use it as a tool, not a weapon,' he said. 'Your weapon is in life is not going to be a knife – it will be something far more powerful and original. But the tweezers will come in handy. Good tweezers are not to be underestimated.'

And he kissed the top of my head and walked away without saying anything.

That's the kind of man that Grandpa was, before Grandma died. Before Sorrotore.

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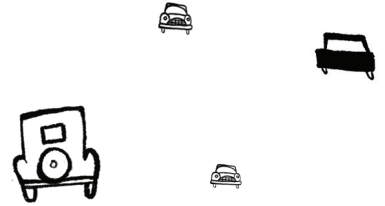
VOCABULARY

Define 'Rapsallion'.

What is a synonym for 'remarkable'?

What does 'detachable' mean in the context of the extract?

What does 'underestimated' mean in the context of the extract?



INFER

What characteristics do you think Vita shares with Grandpa?

What can you tell about Vita's relationship with Grandpa from the fact he calls her 'Rapsallion'?

Why do you think Grandpa speaks from 'behind' Vita? What has he been doing?

Why is this section of text written in italics?

Can you find a phrase that suggests Grandpa loves Vita?

Why is Grandpa 'smiling' on the tree stump?



RETRIEVE

Why does Vita want to be alone in the woods?

Why does Vita feel sad?

Who does the 'voice behind' Vita belong to?

What does Grandpa say is the proper name for the penknife?

Who did the penknife used to belong to?

What does Grandpa advise Vita to use the penknife for?

What two things have happened to Grandpa to make him change?

EXPLAIN

What impression do you get of Vita's relationship with Grandpa?

Explain how Grandpa helps Vita in the extract.

PREDICT

Predict how Vita might use the penknife that Grandpa has given her.

Predict what will happen when Vita reunites with Grandpa.

Predict how Vita and Grandpa's relationship might develop.



SUMMARISE

Summarise the advice that Grandpa gives Vita in less than 50 words.



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ACTIVITY TIME!

WRITING DIALOGUE

Subjects: Literacy: Reading Comprehension, Writing: Creative Writing, Speaking & Listening, Drama, PSHE

- In the extract, Katherine Rundell uses dialogue to show the strength of Vita's relationship with Grandpa. Find examples of how she does this by picking out bits of dialogue and discussing with a partner why your selections are effective.
- It's your turn to emulate Katherine Rundell's style. First, make it your mission to capture family members having conversations while you are at home. Consider how the simple things people say show their love for each other.
- Using a notebook, jot down the interesting things your family members say to each other, as well as how they say it.
- Turn your little snippets of overheard conversations into examples of dialogue. Write them down and read them out with a partner. Do they sound more authentic than anything you might just 'make up'?
- Act out your dialogue with a partner and perform it to the class. Is there anything that you might be able to improve?

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EXTRACT 4: PLANNING A HEIST

(Taken from Chapter 8)

Samuel looked at her for a long, thickly laden moment. ‘My father’s at home in Mashonaland, in Africa,’ he said. ‘He gave everything he had to send me out here, when I was a tiny kid, to tour with my uncle: to join the act. If I don’t, I’m letting down the whole family: cousins, aunts: everyone. But – when I was three, I taught myself to backflip. I loved the way it felt when I landed back up on my feet: like a magic trick. I can’t give it up.’ He stared at his hands, which were covered in chalk. ‘So – I can understand not wanting to do what you’re told.’

And then he smiled, and the smile rose up to his ears and his disconcerting beauty vanished in favour of glee: the glee of the usually careful turned reckless. ‘Exactly how wide is the wall?’

‘I don’t know. Quite wide, I think.’

‘And exactly how tall?’

Vita shook her head. ‘About fifteen feet. Maybe twenty. I don’t know.’

‘I need to know exactly. For the rope. Do you have a blueprint?’

‘A what?’ said Arkady. ‘I don’t know that word.’

‘It’s an architectural plan of a house,’ said Samuel.

‘I don’t have one,’ said Vita, ‘but I can find one.’ Her voice, she noted with relief, sounded far more confident than she felt.

‘If you find one,’ said Samuel, ‘then I’m in. I’ll join your heist.’ And he wiped his chalky palms on his black trousers and stuck out his hand.

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VOCABULARY

What does the phrase 'thickly laden' mean in the context of the extract?

What is a synonym for 'disconcerting'?

Define 'blueprint'.

What is a 'heist'?



INFER

Why does Samuel look at Vita for a 'long, thickly laden moment'? What might he be thinking about?

Can you find a phrase that suggests Samuel has a lot in common with Vita?

What sort of relationship do you think Samuel, Vita and Arkady have?

Can you find a phrase that suggests Samuel is unique and follows his own path?

How do you think Arkady might differ from Samuel? Why?

How does Vita feel in the extract? What does she think of Samuel?



RETRIEVE

Where is Samuel's father from?

How would Samuel let down his whole family?

What does Samuel love to do?

How does Samuel feel about helping Vita with her plan?

What are the three characters planning to do together?

Why does Samuel want to know the height of the wall?

What does Samuel want Vita to find out before he joins the heist?



EXPLAIN

What impression do you get of Samuel?

Explain why Samuel decides to help Vita.

PREDICT

Predict how the relationship between Vita, Samuel and Arkady will develop.

Predict what the three characters will do together.

Predict how Vita, Samuel and Arkady might help each other.



SUMMARISE

Summarise what happens in the extract in less than 50 words.



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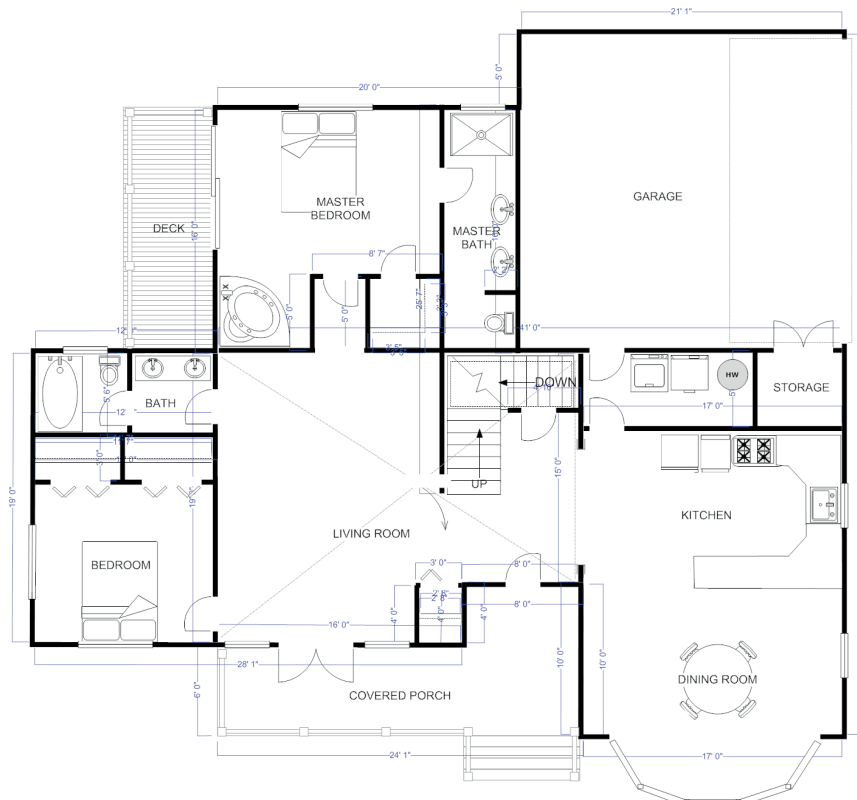


ACTIVITY TIME!

BLUEPRINT OF MY HOME

Subjects: Literacy: Writing to Instruct & Inform, Design, Art & Technology, Geography

- Imagine that you have to create a blueprint (a design plan or technical drawing) for your own home.
- First of all, look at examples of other blueprints (like the one included below) to see what you need to include.
- Walk around your home and begin to take notes about the layout. If you want to make your blueprint perfect for a heist, you must include key measurements, including height of the walls.
- Draw a blueprint for your home. If your home has more than one floor, begin with the downstairs. Remember, blueprints are normally sketched from the sky view, and they are flat.
- Finally, describe your blueprint by writing a short summary of the key points. Write as though you are informing friends taking part in the heist of the most important information to consider.



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ACTIVITY TIME!

HEIST STORYBOARDS

Subjects: Literacy: Writing: Creative Writing, Speaking & Listening, Design, Art & Technology

- Make an original Heist Storyboard with your partner! Fold a blank paper in half, and then fold it in half again to create four boxes.
- In the first box begin your own storyboard by drawing a character or scene at the beginning of a heist story. Your first box might include a crime scene, or a person wondering how to get revenge. Use words and illustrations to tell your story.
- Next, swap pieces of paper with your partner. Continue their story by drawing the second scene of the story in the next box. They will do the same to your story.
- Swap papers until all your boxes are filled. Make sure to use the information your partner contributed to create a story with consistent characters and a beginning, middle and end. Share the ideas that you've come up with together to the class.

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CONGRATULATIONS!

YOU'VE COMPLETED THE RESOURCE PACK FOR THE GOOD THIEVES

We would love to see what your class has created – please do email any photos or examples of their work over to us on childrensmarketing@bloomsbury.com or share via Twitter using the hashtag #TheGoodThieves and tagging us at @KidsBloomsbury.

Head over to www.bloomsbury.com/KatherineRundellBooks to discover more about Katherine Rundell's books and to download teaching resources for *The Wolf Wilder* and *The Explorer*.

