

# THE SECRET DETECTIVES

## Discussion Notes

- We learn at the beginning that Isobel dislikes people – why do you think this is? What has her life been like so far?
- Because Isobel wasn't born in England, Letitia asks if she's a 'native' (p. 13). Why do you think this makes Isobel angry?
- How do you think you would feel if you saw a crime taking place? What do you think you would have done afterwards?
- Isobel decides quite quickly that she likes Sam – why do you think this is?
- Sam says that people often don't mean to upset others, 'But they go on saying unfair things anyway. And being unfair altogether. And a person can get tired of it.' (p.70) Why does Lettie's comment upset him? Can you think of any times you have upset someone without meaning to? What did you learn from this?
- Why do you think Isobel gets so angry when Letitia touches her notebook? Is there anything that makes you feel this way too?
- Isobel, Sam and Lettie seem like unlikely friends – what words would you use to describe each of them?
- Isobel isn't very trusting of adults. Why do you think this is?
- The whole book is set on a boat. How does this setting affect the investigation? Can you think of some other locations that would be good for a detective story?
- Isobel starts to worry that Sam likes Lettie more than he likes her. Why do you think she feels this way? Discuss what you think about Sam's response (p. 101).
- Why do you think Lettie hadn't told Isobel and Sam that she had been there on the night of the murder?
- The answers don't come quickly to the Petty, Lettie and Khan Detective Agency – what did you think they were expecting? How do they stay motivated to find the answers?
- Sam says 'There can be good things that happen because terrible things happened, you know!' (p. 165) What does he mean by this? Can you think of any examples?
- What do Isobel, Sam and Lettie learn from each other through their conversations? For example, about friendship (e.g. p. 101) and identity (e.g. p. 163-166).
- 'There's been a murder, Petty. It doesn't get more exciting than that. Anything is possible now.' (p. 174) Come up with some of your own predictions for the story.
- Lettie says, 'You have to have something. Mine is being pretty.' (p. 196) Discuss the different skills and personality traits of Isobel, Sam and Lettie. What do they each bring to their friendship and what skills are useful in their investigation?



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## Discussion Notes

- Everyone on the ship seems to have a secret – who do you think are the most suspicious characters and why? How do the different characters help to build the mystery?
- Do you think Isobel, Sam and Lettie would have become friends if there wasn't a murder to solve? Why/why not?
- Sam says, 'It's just funny, isn't it? That how you can look can make such a difference?' (p. 214) What do you think he means by this? Do you agree with what he is saying?
- Did you expect the ending? Now you know who the murderer was, think back to the story – can you spot any clues you didn't notice before?
- How do the characters change throughout their journey? Discuss what you think might happen to them next. Will they stay friends? What will their lives be like in England?



We hope you enjoyed reading  
The Secret Detectives! Share your thoughts and  
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#TheSecretDetectives

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## Activity Ideas

### Write a Newspaper Report

Sam says he wants to be a proprietor of newspapers so he can ‘run investigations’ and ‘solve crimes’. Write a newspaper report on the murder case from *The Secret Detectives*. Start by thinking about a headline for your piece – how will you draw your readers in? In your piece include an introduction to the case, cover what happened, where and when. You could also include witness statements and the evidence that was discovered, the outcome of the investigation and a conclusion. Think about the language used in a newspaper – use short sentences, formal language and make sure to focus on the facts.

### Create a Job Advert for a Detective

Think about the skills needed to be a detective – make a list of the key skills as a group. Create a job advert for a detective. Include a short job description, a list of skills needed and the key responsibilities of the job. You should also include a section on what the benefits of the job are. Share your job adverts as a group. Would any of you apply to be a detective?

### What Happens Next?

The story ends as the children arrive in England. Choose either Isobel, Sam or Lettie and write about what might happen to them next. Does Isobel get on with her uncle? Does Lettie enjoy boarding school? Do the children stay in touch? How do they feel about their new lives? Think about how each of the characters changed during their time on board the *S.S. Marianna* – how do they view their new life following their voyage?

### Plan Your Own Detective Story

*The Secret Detectives* is a brilliant murder mystery. Plan your own detective story, using this book to inspire you! Think about the setting – will it take place on land, at sea, on a plane or somewhere else? Plan your crime – who committed it, what was their motive, how did they do it? Who will be investigating – is it a group of friends or a solo detective? Plan the key pieces of evidence – when and how will your detective discover the evidence? Think about adding in different suspects as well so that the answers aren’t clear straight away! Lastly, can you come up with a name for your story?



We hope you enjoyed these activities!  
Share your work with us on Twitter @nosycrow  
#TheSecretDetectives

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