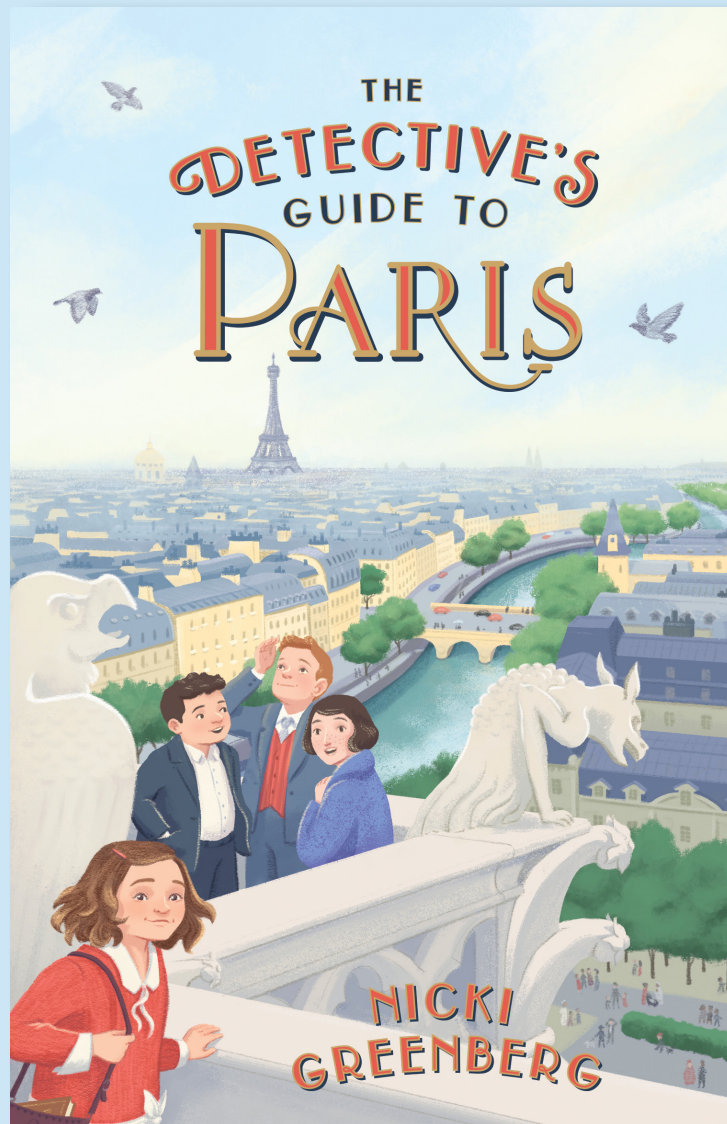


Classroom Resources



Category

Middle grade historical mystery

Recommended reading ages

9-12

Development of general capabilities

Critical and creative thinking

Literacy skills

Historical research

About this book

Blurb

It's springtime in Paris, and crime is in the air ...

Pepper Stark and her friends came to Paris for the glamour, the gâteaux and the good times. But intrigue seems to follow the young detectives wherever they go.

When an American tourist and a priceless Russian treasure both disappear from their hotel, Pepper is sure the mysteries are connected and is determined to solve them both. But this time she has competition: former thief-turned-amateur-detective Georges Rème is also on the case. And her friends seem to be more interested in croissants than in crime.

Pepper will do anything to beat Rème to the punch and prove herself as a proper sleuth – even if that means misleading the people closest to her. In this unusual hotel, where everyone has secrets to hide, who can Pepper trust to lead her to the answers? And how far will she go to get them?

1920s Paris bursts to life in this captivating return to the world and characters of Nicki Greenberg's The Detective's Guide mysteries.

Book details

- ISBN: 9781922863591
- Publication date: August 2023
- RRP: \$17.99

The author

Nicki Greenberg is an award-winning writer and illustrator based in Melbourne, Australia. Her work includes critically acclaimed graphic novels, picture books, fiction and non-fiction. She loves to roller skate, crochet, and make funny creatures. In her spare time she works as a lawyer.

Find this book at our website:

<https://affirmpress.com.au/publishing/the-detectives-guide-to-paris/>

Contents of this pack

- pp 3-5. Discussion points in key themes: Ambition and competitiveness; Deceptive appearances; Changing times
- pp3-5. Extension activities: Creative writing; Partner activity; Historical research
- pp 5-6. Two book response activities: Creative writing; Book design

Discussion in key themes

Ambition and competitiveness

- How does Pepper feel about becoming a recognised detective? When and to whom is she vocal about this ambition? When and to whom does she keep this ambition private? Why?
- Pepper and Rème are both driven to find the Fabergé egg. What is Pepper's reason to find the egg? Is this similar or different to Rème's reason for trying to find it?
- Pepper views Rème as her competitor. Does Rème ever view Pepper as his competitor?
- In what ways does Pepper struggle with working with Rème? Why?
- How does Pepper value teamwork when it comes to sleuthing? What does she consider the disadvantages to be? Does she recognise the advantages in having accomplices?
- Compare the detective skills and strengths of both Pepper and Rème. Would you say that the odds are stacked against Pepper, or does she have some skills and strategies that put her ahead of Rème?
- How did the book about Herlock Sholmès foreshadow Pepper and Rème's race to find the egg?
- Pepper's ambition to become recognised as a detective sometimes gets in the way of her enjoying time with her friends. Choose a friend character (Elliot, Norah or Sol) and think about how Pepper makes this character feel throughout the book. Was Pepper a bad friend to this character at any points? How so? Was this resolved?
- Pepper is focused on finding the egg, while Norah really wants to help Natalya find

Lucky. Why does Norah prioritise Natalya's search for Lucky over Pepper's search for the egg? How does Pepper view Norah's loyalty to Natalya?

- Pepper and Rème are not the only characters in competition with each other! Can you describe the rivalry between Swindon Ogilvie and Janet Drexler?
- What are Bastien Mondésir's ambitions? What challenges does he come against in achieving his ambitions? Did you empathise with Mondésir? What parts made you more or less empathetic towards him?
- While Pepper, Elliot and Norah are enjoying a holiday in Paris (and solving a crime!), Sol is also fulfilling a dream of his own. Consider the way that Sol's ambition to be a world-famous chef is depicted in this book. Is Pepper's yearning to be a detective viewed as an equal ambition to Sol's? Why/why not? Does this change by the end of the story?

Extension activity: Creative writing

Your task is to write a short passage (a minimum of a few paragraphs to a maximum page in length) explaining some ambitions that you have for your life. You can focus on a dream career, or you can describe some key goals for the immediate or near future.

The aim is to identify at least one thing that you're aiming to achieve, and to describe how you will achieve this, outlining the practical steps to how this might be achieved and musing on how you will complete these steps. You should also include the reasons why you have chosen this ambition/these goals, and how you will feel once they are achieved.

For example, if you were the character Sol, you'd write that you have a passion for fine dining and

exquisite foods, and that your dream is to be a world-renowned pastry chef. You will achieve this dream by first finding a job in a kitchen and then working your way up to be a sous chef for some of the most talented chefs in your city, before one day opening your own restaurant. You will also be focused on saving money to dine in restaurants, sampling as many delicious cuisines as you can to inspire your practice!

If a short passage feels too daunting, perhaps you could create a mindmap showing your various goals, or you could write a comprehensive list of your goals in order of priority.

Deceptive appearances

- Describe which characters differed most from your first impressions of them to the end of the story. What techniques did the author use to deceive you?
- When Paul Poiret first appears in the book, he is standoffish and proud. But later we learn his fashion business is in decline. Why do you think he still acts as though he's the 'King of Fashion'? What does his refusal to change or to admit to his change of circumstances tell you about him? What does it tell you about the society he lives in?
- Apply the question above to the Countess, too. In what ways is the Countess deceptive about her circumstances, to whom, and why?
- Are there any characters that Pepper, Norah, Sol and Elliot have differing views about? Which characters? Why might they have different views on these characters?
- Pepper and her friends change their perception of Lucky as the mystery unfolds. Why do their opinions of him

change, and how do their views of Lucky at the end of the story differ from their first impressions of Lucky?

- Pepper's first impression of Natalya in Paris appears quite different to Norah's first impression of Natalya on the ocean liner. Why was Pepper resistant to Natalya at first? How does Pepper's opinion of Natalya change as the story progresses?
- Mondésir was one of Pepper's first suspects. Why was this the case? Did you agree that he should be a suspect?
- Can you find examples of prejudice in the story? Who was prejudiced, and why?

Extension activity: Partner activity

For this activity, students should be paired with someone they do not usually sit or socialise with. The aim is for them to get to know something about their partner that has changed their impression of this person. Each student should ask their partner questions, and at the end of the activity, each person should tell the class something that they learned about their partner, and why this information surprised them or changed their view of their partner. Sample questions are provided below.

- What was your favourite hobby as a child, and is it the same now?
- What is your dream job?
- If you could live anywhere, where would you choose, and why?
- What is your favourite family tradition?
- What is your goal after leaving school?
- If you could go back in time, which time period would you pick, and why?
- Do you have a favourite part of the local town/city, and why?

Changing times

- What did you learn about the Russian revolution in this story? How did the Countess' and Natalya's backgrounds help you to understand the Russian revolution?
- What did you learn about life for some Russians in Paris post-revolution?
- Pepper learns that Paris was once a playground for Russian nobles, but that this role is now filled by American tourists. Why do you think this change came about?
- What else did you learn about life in Paris at this time? What does Pepper learn about life for wealthy travellers versus the locals?
- Consider this statement and discuss whether you agree or disagree with it:
Women had more freedom in Paris in the 1930s than they did in Australia at the same time.
- Tippy Valentine explains that Parisian dance halls do not require a 'paper bag test'. What does this mean? Research the historical context and find out what other forms of racism were prevalent in US society at this time, and how this has since changed.
- What did you learn about the world of art through this book? Which art movement was becoming more popular? Why was Mondésir excluded from this art movement, and what does this reflect about the types of artists who were leading the movement?
- Closer to home, Pepper is navigating changes within her family and spotting changes within her friends, too. Can you describe some of the changes Pepper is experiencing? How does she feel about them? If you've read the previous books in this series, you might like to reflect on

Pepper's relationships with her dad, her stepmother, her stepbrother, and/or her two best friends.

Extension activity: Historical research

Your task is to pick an aspect of Parisian society in the late 1920s to mid 1930s, research it, and capture your findings through a written piece, a poster, or a presentation. The areas of research could be (but aren't limited to):

- Fashion trends, e.g. how did the fashionable middle to upper classes dress, and how was this different to the lower classes?
- Types of work, e.g. what types of jobs existed and who performed them?
- Life between wars, e.g. how had the first world war shaped Parisian society in this time?
- Russian revolution, e.g. why were aristocratic Russians living in Paris, and what was life like for them here versus at home?
- Inequality, e.g. how did racism affect life in Paris for some?
- Gender roles and expectations, e.g. how were women expected to behave, and how were boundaries pushed?

Book response activities

Creative writing: News article

Imagine you are writing an article about the Fabergè egg theft for your regular newspaper column.

Start by writing a catchy headline and your name at the top. Then, write an introduction sentence about the case. Your aim is to hook the reader in, so you need to make sure this introductory sentence is sharp, concise and intriguing.

Spend around three or four more paragraphs

summarising what happened. Remember to be as accurate as possible by including details about the egg and the location where it was stolen. You could make up quotes from Pepper and other witnesses where you see fit. Remember that you should not point the finger at any suspect because this will lead to defamation!

Once you've included all the most important points, remember to end on a strong note. If this is an opinion piece, you could end on a rhetorical question or a bold statement.

Book design: Creating a cover

Your task is to design a new front cover for the book! Start by studying the current cover. Are there elements you'd keep the same from this cover, or would you change it all? Perhaps you'd like to include a different scene or setting from the book? Perhaps you'd like to use a different painting style? You might like to consider changing the title, or maybe you'd like to add a tagline?

If you're stuck for inspiration, have a look at other recent historical/mystery middle-grade novels such as those pictured here. Perhaps you could visit the school library to find other books for inspiration? When you're finished, share with a friend or as a class to see how similar or different your ideas were, and how they compare to the real cover.

