

AN ILLUSTRATED MYSTERY

THE SIGNAL AT LANTERN HILL

A mystery in eight chapters



Read the clues. Challenge your assumptions.

Ages 10-12 | Intermediate English

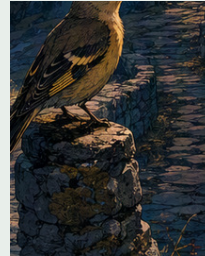
Before you begin

A public challenge, an old map, and several possible explanations.



Milo

Milo notices details and records them in a notebook. He sometimes takes longer than he needs to.



Pip

Pip is imaginative and quick to spot patterns. Sometimes she becomes certain before checking the facts.

Your reading mission

01 Notice

collect details from the words and pictures.

02 Predict

suggest an explanation, but stay ready to change it.

03 Check

compare your theory with new evidence.

Read and listen

Read chapters 1-8 on pages 3-10. Pause at each question before turning the page. In the ebook, Play this page reads the page you can see. Read to me turns story pages automatically and stops when the story ends.

After the mystery

Use pages 11-14 to explore vocabulary, explain the clues, practise language, and write. Suggested answers are on page 15. You can respond aloud or on paper.

PAUSE & THINK

Can two people notice the same event but reach different conclusions? Think of an example.

An unexpected invitation



At dusk, three flashes appeared above Lantern Hill. The old observatory had been dark for years. Below it, the village was preparing for its lantern festival. Milo stopped beside the noticeboard while Pip circled overhead. A fresh envelope was pinned beneath a poster from the Village History Club.



Inside was a faded map and a message: 'Find what our village nearly lost. Start where the river used to run. Finish before the festival bell.' Pip's eyes brightened. 'A hidden treasure!' Milo examined the small print. 'Perhaps. But it doesn't actually say treasure.' They agreed to investigate together.

PAUSE & THINK

What does the invitation promise? What has Pip added to it?

The map that misled them



The map showed a narrow bridge beside the mill. When they reached the river, however, there was only grass where the crossing should have been. 'We're in the wrong place,' Pip said. Milo compared the hills with the drawing. They matched. Then he noticed a tiny date: 1958.



They followed the public path to a newer footbridge. Its plaque read, 'Built after the great flood of 1964.' While Pip studied the water, Milo copied the date into his notebook. The river had changed course after the flood. 'The map isn't useless,' he said. 'It's a picture of a different time.'

PAUSE & THINK

How can an accurate old map still send someone the wrong way?

A suspicious sound



Near the observatory, a tall crow hurried along the path carrying a metal box. Something inside it clinked. A black feather drifted onto the steps. 'He has the treasure,' Pip whispered. 'We're too late!' Milo felt disappointed, but he stopped himself. They had heard metal. They had not seen coins.



'Excuse me!' Milo called. The crow turned. His work apron was covered in pale dust. 'Looking for the challenge?' he asked. 'The next clue is on the steps. I must finish a repair before the bell.' Then he disappeared around the building. Pip frowned. 'Why didn't he tell us more?'

PAUSE & THINK

Name two facts about the crow and one assumption Pip makes.

First things first



A small stone tablet stood beside the steps. Five short lines had been carved into it. Milo brushed away the dry leaves. 'An inscription,' he said. 'But why a poem?' Pip looked back at the envelope. In one corner, almost hidden beneath a fold, were three words: 'First things first.'



THE STONE TABLET

Night hides the silent lane.
Owls watch the river bend.
Roots hold the hillside still.
Trees shelter every friend.
Home waits beyond the rain.

Milo read the poem twice. Pip tapped the beginning of each line. 'Perhaps we should look at the initials, not the whole sentences.' Milo wrote five letters in his notebook. Together, they formed a direction. He turned the map until its compass arrow pointed the same way as his own.

PAUSE & THINK

Read the first letter of each line. Which direction do they find?

Four empty spaces

1



At the north entrance, a wooden cabinet stood beneath a shelter. A sign identified it as part of the History Club's challenge. Four numbered wheels protected its door. Above them was another clue: 'The year the river changed its mind.' Pip immediately suggested 1958, the date printed on their map.

2



Milo tried it, but the door stayed shut. The festival bell would ring soon. Pip fluttered impatiently. 'Try every number!' 'That would take too long,' Milo replied. 'Let's compare our evidence.' He opened his notebook. There were two dates on the page, and they described two very different events.

PAUSE & THINK

Which event does each date describe? Predict the correct code.

The date that mattered



Milo pointed to his sketch of the footbridge. 'The map was drawn in 1958, but the flood happened in 1964. That's when the river changed course.' Pip checked the clue again. This time, she turned the wheels carefully. One. Nine. Six. Four. The lock clicked, and the cabinet opened.



Inside lay a sealed tin, several photographs, and a bundle of letters tied with blue string. There were no jewels. Pip lifted a photograph showing villagers rebuilding a bridge. 'They look exhausted,' she said. Milo unfolded the first letter. It began, 'To whoever finds this: today we started again.'

PAUSE & THINK

Why is 1964 stronger evidence than 1958 for this particular clue?

The crow's explanation

1



The crow returned and introduced himself as Mr Reed, the village carpenter. He opened his metal box. Inside were tools and small brass fittings. 'I was repairing the lantern shutter,' he explained. 'The History Club asked me to restore the signal for tonight.' Pip glanced at Milo, then lowered her head.

2



'I thought you had taken the prize,' she admitted. Mr Reed smiled. 'A clinking box can tell more than one story.' He explained that children had written the letters after the flood. Their families had saved the village by working together. The cabinet had protected those memories while the observatory was closed.

PAUSE & THINK

What new evidence changes Pip's theory about Mr Reed?

A story worth sharing



At the festival, Milo and Pip helped the History Club display the photographs and letters. Mr Reed placed a clear cover over the old map. Beside it, Milo added a note explaining how the river had moved. Soon, neighbours were pointing out familiar places and discovering relatives in the pictures.



The bell rang. Above the village, the restored lantern sent three steady flashes across the hill. 'Next time,' Pip said, 'I'll ask what's inside the box.' Milo grinned. 'And I'll check the date before choosing a route.' They had finished the challenge. Now the village could continue the story.

PAUSE & THINK

How do Milo and Pip each change during the adventure?

Words that unlock the story

Use the surrounding sentence to work out an unfamiliar word.

faded

less bright or clear than it used to be

The faded map was difficult to read.

evidence

facts or information that help show whether an idea is true

A metal sound was evidence of metal, not necessarily coins.

assumption

an idea accepted as true before it has been checked

Pip's assumption about the crow was wrong.

inscription

words written or carved on an object or surface

The inscription was carved into a stone tablet.

initials

the first letters of names or words

The initials of the poem's lines gave a direction.

restore

to repair something or return it to a former condition

Mr Reed helped restore the observatory's signal.

Use three new words

Choose three words from this page. Write a different sentence for each one about a school, a sport, or another mystery. Make the meaning clear from the context.

Which word names an untested idea? Which one means information that can help you test it? Explain how the two are connected.

Build the case

A convincing answer includes evidence from the story.

1 / Fact or assumption?

Write F for a fact the characters observe, or A for an assumption they have not checked.

The crow was carrying a metal box. _____

The box contained coins. _____

The map was dated 1958. _____

The crow had taken the prize. _____

2 / Explain the clues

How does the poem point the investigators toward the cabinet?

Why does 1958 fail as the code, while 1964 works?

3 / Change your mind

Which detail in chapter 3 could have suggested that Mr Reed was doing an ordinary job? Explain how chapter 7 confirms this possibility.

4 / Read the characters

Who contributes most to solving the challenge: Milo, Pip, or both? Support your view with two different moments from the story.

Language in action

Show when events happen and how ideas connect.

Past actions: background and event

The past continuous describes an action in progress: Milo was studying the map. The past simple can describe a completed event: Pip noticed a date.

While Milo was studying the map, Pip noticed a date.

1 / Complete the sentences

Use the past continuous or past simple form of the verbs in brackets.

While Milo _____ (examine) the clue, Pip _____ (notice) the initials.

Mr Reed _____ (carry) his toolbox when Milo _____ (call) to him.

2 / Connect the ideas

Join each pair into one sentence. Use the word in brackets.

Pip was confident. Her first theory was wrong. (although)

The old map showed a different river route. It had been drawn before the flood.
(because)

3 / Make a careful claim

Compare: The box contains coins. The box might contain coins. Which sentence leaves room for another explanation? Write one possible explanation for the box's sound using might or could.

Write the next signal

Write a 100-130 word mystery scene set one year later.

Your starting point

One year later, Milo and Pip notice a new signal. This time, Pip refuses to make an accusation without evidence.

Plan in four steps

1. Observation: What can they actually see or hear?
2. First theory: What might explain it?
3. New clue: What supports or challenges that theory?
4. Resolution: What do they discover?

Include

1. At least three vocabulary words from page 11.
2. One sentence with a past continuous action and a past simple event.
3. A short exchange of dialogue.
4. A clear difference between a fact and an assumption.

Your scene

Write here or on a separate sheet.

Could a careful reader have worked out the answer? Underline the clue that makes your ending fair.

Check your reasoning

Read this after completing the activities.

Vocabulary / page 11

An assumption is an untested idea. Evidence is information that can help test it. Original sentences will vary.

Build the case / page 12

1. F, A, F, A.
2. The first letters of the poem's five lines spell NORTH. 1958 is the map's date; 1964 is the year of the flood that changed the river's course.
3. The dusty work apron and his mention of a repair suggest an ordinary job. His tools and brass fittings, followed by his explanation about the shutter, support that idea.
4. Both contribute: Milo checks the map and compares the dates; Pip spots the initials and helps open the cabinet. Other evidence-based arguments are possible.

Language / page 13

1. was examining; noticed. was carrying; called.
2. Although Pip was confident, her first theory was wrong. The old map showed a different river route because it had been drawn before the flood.
3. The second sentence leaves room for uncertainty. Example: The box could contain metal tools.

Writing / page 14

There is no single correct ending. Check the word count, the required language, and whether the conclusion follows from a clue the reader has already seen.

Read, discuss, investigate

A flexible lesson for ages 10-12 with intermediate English.

Learning focus

Read for gist and detail; infer motives; distinguish evidence from assumptions; sequence events; use past continuous and past simple forms; express uncertainty; support an opinion with reasons.

A 35-45 minute lesson

5 minutes: introduce the investigators and discuss a first impression that turned out to be wrong.

15-20 minutes: read or listen to the story. Pause after chapters 3, 4, and 5 to collect facts and predictions.

10 minutes: choose vocabulary, comprehension, and language tasks to match the learner's needs.

5-10 minutes: plan a new mystery. Complete the writing task later if needed.

Support and stretch

For support, explain key words before reading and replay one paragraph at a time. For a challenge, ask learners to defend a different interpretation using evidence, or retell a scene from Pip's point of view.

Using the ebook

Every page has its own audio clip. Manual page turns stop the previous clip. Read to me advances through the story, then pauses before the learning pages. It also pauses before the answer key. The transcript highlights the current spoken sentence. Use Slower or replay when helpful.

About this resource

An original fictional story and illustrated reader. The village, its history, and its inhabitants are invented. This is intermediate learning material, not a standardized reading-level assessment.