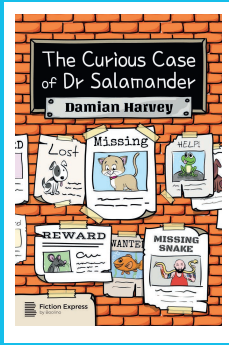


Chapter 4 · The Cage



When Mrs Heckle arrives home and corners Jazz and Mortimer, it looks as if they are finally about to meet Dr Salamander. But Mrs Heckle has a large cage with her, and the twins begin to worry...

THE CURIOUS CASE OF DR SALAMANDER

Damian Harvey

CONTENT



READ!

- **Reading comprehension questions:** 10 multiple choice questions to test text retrieval and reading comprehension. These questions may also be completed online at www.fictionexpress.co.uk
- **Guided reading:** teacher's notes and a written response worksheet comprising 6 questions which allow for deeper response to the story, looking at personal response, inference and prediction



WRITE!

- **"Inspire!" words** to encourage children to include them in their own writing
- **"Spotlight!" word list** of the words highlighted and defined online
- **Writing worksheet:** write to the author via the blog
- **Grammar worksheet:** correctly spell commonly misspelt words



TALK!

- **Voting options:** discussion points for each voting option
- **Discussion activity:** suggest a new and different ending for chapter 4



EXPLORE!

- **Activity:** word bingo



Name: _____

1

What has Mrs Heckle got outside the front door?

- A. A phone
- B. Her shopping bags
- C. A big cage

2

What did Dr Salamander think when he saw the twins on the first day?

- A. They would be trouble
- B. They would be useful
- C. They would be friendly

3

What do the children try and do when Mrs Heckle goes outside for the cage?

- A. Hit her over the head
- B. Lock her out of the house
- C. Escape through the back window

4

What happens when the twins carry the cage upstairs?

- A. They drop it on Mrs Heckle
- B. Mortimer secretly breaks the lock
- C. The cage seems to help them

5

What do the twins think the cage is for?

- A. A bear
- B. Them
- C. Mrs Heckle



Name: _____

6

What do the twins see in the attic?

- A. Lamps, bottles and jars
- B. Boxes and old toys
- C. Piles of empty cages

7

What is strange about the chair?

- A. It is surprisingly small
- B. It is covered in tubes and wires
- C. It seems to glow

8

What sort of smile does Mrs Heckle have?

- A. A crooked smile
- B. A toothy grin
- C. An evil smirk

9

How do Mortimer and Jazz get in the cage?

- A. An invisible force pushes them in
- B. Mrs Heckle picks up the cage and puts it over them
- C. They can't stop themselves climbing in

10

What does Mrs Heckle tell the children they will be?

- A. A tasty stew once they've been fattened up
- B. Guinea pigs for Dr Salamander's experiments
- C. Let out once they have been taught a lesson



1

Ask: How has the story changed this week? Discuss how in the previous chapters we had mysteries and strange happenings. Now we have the children in real danger. Dr Salamander and Mrs Heckle are not just eccentric but sinister; Mrs Heckle is not just grumpy but bad.

Ask: What are the key events? For example: discovering that Mrs Heckle plans to keep them prisoner, seeing the attic and the chair, being locked in the cage.

2

Ask: What is Mrs Heckle like? Encourage the children to look through the chapter to locate details, for example: 'crowded', 'wagging a bony finger', 'narrowed her eyes', 'glared', 'rubbing her hands together', she moves soundlessly and it appears she can push them without touching them. Ask: What does she remind you of? Point out that she is a bit like the witch in *Hansel and Gretel* who puts the siblings in a cage after she catches them at her house.

3

In groups, ask the children to describe Dr Salamander's attic room, again asking the children to hunt for details in the text, for example: 'brightly lit by a number of wall and desk lamps', 'shelves full of bottles and jars lined the walls', 'workbenches', 'books and papers'.

Ask: What sort of room is this? Discuss how it is like a Victorian laboratory or a cross between a witch's room and a science lab.

4

Ask a volunteer to describe the chair. Ask: How do you think it is used? Speculate on how someone might sit in the chair and put on the helmet. Ask: What experiments do you think Dr Salamander is doing with the chair? (TEACHER NOTE: Remember previous predictions about invisible animals in the last chapter.)

Ask: What do you predict might happen in the next chapter? (TEACHER NOTE: We will probably see the chair in action - perhaps with one of the children in it!)

5

Ask: How do Jazz and Mortimer behave in this chapter? Agree that they are brave but foolish to take the cage upstairs.

Ask: What would the plot be like if Jazz and Mortimer were shy and scared? (TEACHER NOTE: They would still be safely at home.)

Ask: How do we know they are scared in this chapter? Look together for clues in the text: 'startled gasps', 'uncomfortable', 'But Mortimer couldn't move', 'shiver up Mortimer's spine'.

6

Ask: What clues and mysteries are there in this chapter? Ask: What is strange about the large cage? (TEACHER NOTE: It seems to move by itself.) What makes Jazz and Mortimer stumble backwards?

Ask: Who or what do you think opened the library door? (TEACHER NOTE: It seems to be someone invisible.)

Ask: Do you think Dr Salamander exists? Is he invisible himself, or is he Mrs Heckle in disguise?



Name: _____

1 _____

What was your favourite event from this chapter?

2 _____

What is Mrs Heckle like?

3 _____

Can you describe Dr Salamander's attic?



Name: _____

4 _____

What do you think the strange chair is for?

5 _____

How do you know that Mortimer is scared when the library door opens?

6 _____

Who or what do you think opens the library door?



Here is some of the challenging or potentially unfamiliar vocabulary used in chapter 4 of *The Curious Case of Dr Salamander*.

You may wish to explore this vocabulary, to improve children's understanding of the chapter, and inspire and enhance the quality of their own writing. You might like to display the words in the classroom, and encourage children to use new vocabulary as part of the Write! worksheet tasks.

dashed

feel very
small

insisted

lined the
walls

shoved

uncomfortable

unwanted
guests

wagging



Find these words in chapter 4. Use the definition to check that you understand the meaning of the sentences you find them in.

awkward – difficult

believe – accept that something is true or that you trust what someone has said

budge – move with pressure

contained – used to hold something inside

creaked – made a scraping sound when moved

creepy – another word for ‘spooky’ or ‘odd’

crooked – bent or twisted out of shape

crowed – said with pride, like you have won something

dashed – another word for ‘ran very quickly’

drag – another word for ‘pull’, often used to describe the action of pulling something that is very heavy across the floor

equipment – items needed for a task or to complete a job

examine – look closely at something

experiments – scientific tests

fear – an unpleasant feeling caused by the possibility of danger, pain or harm

feel very small – a phrase that means ‘to feel humiliated or belittled’

flight (of stairs) – a set of stairs, often between different floors in a building or home

glared – looked at someone closely with an angry expression

glued (to the floor) – a phrase that means ‘unable to move’ and ‘rooted to the spot’

guinea pig – a pet animal, plus the name given to something that is used for experiments

heap – an untidy pile

hopefully – feeling optimistic about an event

huffing and puffing – breathing in and out loudly, often when undertaking a difficult physical task



insisted – demanded something, or said forcefully

interest – excitement, something you'd want to find out more about

lined the walls – walls covered in objects and often quite untidy

narrowed – closed up

noticed – another word for 'saw'

poking (your nose) – being a bit of a busybody and trying to find out about someone else's life

protest – disagree with what someone has said or done

research – investigation of something to try and find the answer

rude – impolite and bad-mannered

scattered – spread everywhere

scientific formulas – scientific and mathematical sums, written down using symbols

shoved – pushed hard

skidding halt – coming to a sudden stop

snapped – said in a short, abrupt manner

spine – backbone

spying – watching someone closely to collect information about their daily activities

struggled – found something difficult to do, such as pulling a heavy cage along the floor

stumbled – tripped as if about to fall

thieves – people who take other people's belongings, often breaking into their homes to steal items

uncomfortable – a feeling of unease

unwanted guest – someone who gets into a house or a party without an invitation

wagging – moving to and fro, such as moving your finger from side to side

wobbling – moving unsteadily



Name: _____

A character's personality, actions, thoughts and emotions affect the plot of any story. Post a message to Damian Harvey on the book forum for *The Curious Case of Dr Salamander* about your favourite character and how his or her actions are affecting this chapter. Use these questions to help you decide what to say. Fill in the boxes then choose the elements you are most interested in to write your message.

1. Who is your favourite character? _____

Explain why: _____

Write a question that you would like to ask Damian Harvey about this character.

2. What two questions would you like to ask the author about what might happen to your favourite character in the upcoming final chapter?

1. _____

2. _____

3. How do you think your favourite character thinks or feels by the end of the chapter? Would he or she have liked a different end? What could that ending be?



Name: _____

Some words are tricky to spell. Choose the correct spelling of these commonly misspelt words and write it on the line. Remember to try and sound out the words and look for relationships between letters and sounds, even if they are unusual.

enough	enuff	enouf	_____
breeth	breath	breah	_____
ordinery	ordenari	ordinary	_____
experiment	expereement	experimint	_____
library	lybrary	lybrairi	_____
notise	notice	notis	_____
surprise	surprice	serprise	_____
intrest	interest	interestt	_____
through	threu	throo	_____
strainge	stranje	strange	_____
beleve	believe	beleev	_____
perhaps	peraps	perhapss	_____



What happens next?

A

Dr Salamander suddenly appears in the corner of the room

Why do you think we haven't met Dr Salamander yet? Is he a real character? Perhaps he isn't there at all. Discuss these possibilities as a class. How could he suddenly appear in the corner of the room? What do you think will happen in the final chapter if this is the winning option?

B

The door to their cage swings open on its own

Why and how do you think the cage door might swing open on its own? What should Jazz and Mortimer do if this happens? Do you think they should escape from the house or continue to solve the mystery of Dr Salamander? Give reasons for your answer. Predict what will happen in chapter 5 if this is the winning option.

C

The strange chair starts to shake and rattle

What could be making the chair rattle and shake? Why do you think the strange chair is in the attic in the first place? What might it be used for? Do you think Jazz and Mortimer should try and escape from the cage and use the chair? What do you think will happen in the final chapter if this is the winning option?

→ Which option do you think would be the most exciting one for the final chapter of *The Curious Case of Dr Salamander*?

Discussion Activity

In pairs or a small group, come up with a different ending to chapter 4 that was not given as one of the voting options. Think about how this new ending will affect the direction of the plot in chapter 5. What might it mean for your favourite character in the story? Why do you think the author selected the voting options that he did for the end of this chapter? Are there any clues in the characters' actions, thoughts and feelings that reveal what might happen in the final chapter of *The Curious Case of Dr Salamander*?



Name: _____

In groups of five, play word bingo. Cut out the sentences on the next page and put them in a box. Then cut out the bingo cards below.

One person in the group reads out each sentence, pulling them out of the box. Do not read out the word before the sentence. The others in the group look at their bingo cards and cross off a word if it is used in the sentence. As soon as you have crossed out all the words on your bingo card shout, "Bingo!"

enough	breath
experiment	ordinary
library	noticed

noticed	through
surprised	interest
library	enough

surprised	interest
strange	through
ordinary	breath

experiment	noticed
strange	ordinary
ordinary	breath



enough: “You’ll find out soon enough,” she replied, with a crooked smile.

breath: Mrs Heckle had let go of the cage now and was standing by the front door, trying to get her breath back.

ordinary: It wasn’t just an ordinary chair... It was a chair like no other they had ever seen.

experiment: “Dr Salamander wanted a new guinea pig for his experiments,” she said. “Now he’s got two!”

library: The twins turned towards the library door just in time to see the handle turning.

noticed: It was then that Mortimer noticed another flight of stairs.

surprised: “I’m not surprised,” she said, “if this is how you behave.”

interest: The twins had been up there a few times but there wasn’t much of interest.

strange: There were workbenches full of strange-looking equipment and piles of books and papers were scattered everywhere.

through: Jazz and Mortimer stared in fear as the housekeeper, Mrs Heckle, walked in through the door.

ANSWERS

READ! Comprehension

1. What has Mrs Heckle got outside the front door?
C. A big cage
2. What did Dr Salamander think when he saw the twins on the first day?
A. They would be trouble
3. What do the children try and do when Mrs Heckle goes outside for the cage?
C. Escape through the back window
4. What happens when the twins carry the cage upstairs?
C. The cage seems to help them
5. What do the twins think the cage is for?
B. Them
6. What do the twins see in the attic?
A. Lamps, bottles and jars
7. What is strange about the chair?
B. It is covered in tubes and wires
8. What sort of smile does Mrs Heckle have?
A. A crooked smile
9. How do Mortimer and Jazz get in the cage?
A. An invisible force pushes them in
10. What does Mrs Heckle tell the children they will be?
B. Guinea pigs for Dr Salamander's experiments

WRITE! Worksheet: Commonly misspelt words

1. enough
2. breath
3. ordinary
4. experiment
5. library
6. notice
7. surprise
8. interest
9. through
10. strange
11. believe
12. perhaps