



SNEAKS

READING GUIDE

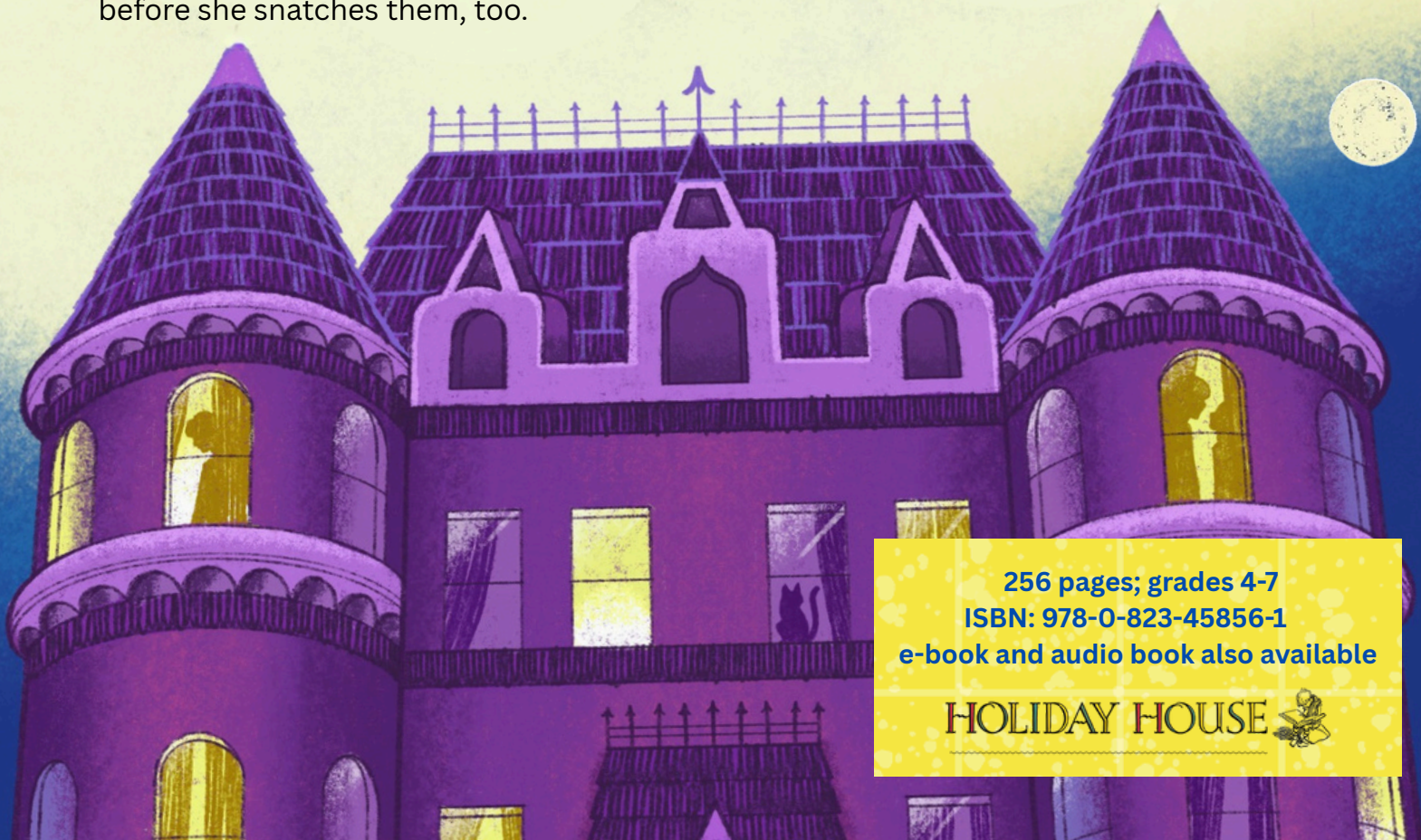


A MISSING CHILD AND AN APARTMENT THAT SHOULD BE EMPTY SPUR TWO TWEENS TO SOLVE AN INCREASINGLY TANGLED NEIGHBORHOOD MYSTERY IN THIS PAGE-TURNING MIDDLE GRADE DEBUT.

Valory has developed an unfortunate reputation as a thief—primarily because she steals things—though she has resolved to change her ways. Rook is a total asparagus-eater (a.k.a. a good kid), but he likes to spy on his neighbors. Nobody’s perfect, right?

The twelve-year-olds form an unlikely alliance when they encounter suspicious behavior in an “empty” apartment across the alley from Rook’s house. While agoraphobia keeps home-schooled Rook trapped on his property, confident and street-smart Valory can roam the scene undetected. Their opposite personalities might, in fact, be key to their success.

But their amateur detective mission morphs into something more sinister when they realize the apartment next door could be connected to a recent kidnapping. When the sleuths realize they’re also being watched, the pressure is on to unmask the villain... before she snatches them, too.



256 pages; grades 4-7
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e-book and audio book also available

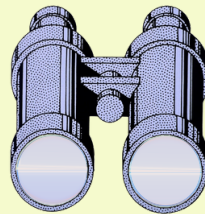
HOLIDAY HOUSE 

AMY TERN always knew she'd write books someday, but she did a bunch of other stuff first, such as live in Japan, work for exchange programs and think tanks, and raise two book-loving sons. She is currently at work on a new mystery novel. She lives in Virginia with her husband and a petulant gecko.



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The questions and classroom extensions in this guide correlate to Common Core English Language Arts Standards for reading and writing: Ideas and Details R.1-3; Craft and Structure R.4-6; Comprehension of Complex Texts R.10; Writing Composition W.4.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CHAPTERS 1-5

1. In the first two chapters, one from Valory's point of view and one from Rook's, you get a basic idea of both characters. What are your impressions of each of them? How does the author's choice of language in these first two chapters show you their personalities?
2. In Chapter 2, Rook believes his house isn't huge and compares it to larger houses in his neighborhood, but to Valory Rook's house is a mansion. What does this difference show you about perspective? How can perspective cause people to not understand each other? Why is it important to consider other people's perspectives?
3. Rook and Valory have very different childhoods. In Chapter 5, Valory says her mom describes Rook's childhood as "A strange life for a child." What makes Rook's childhood "strange" or different from what is typical? What about Valory's? Which type is more difficult for a child to navigate?
4. In Chapter 5, Rook says his parents think he wastes too much time on the balcony. What are his parents missing about the importance of this time for Rook?

CHAPTERS 6–10

5. In Chapter 6, when Rook and Valory hear the “mystery music” together for the first time, Rook says he can tell about the player’s personality by how she plays. Do you believe that how someone plays an instrument tells you about who they are as a person? Can you think of examples from listening to music in your own life, or from another story you have read?
6. Valory rides the bus in Chapter 7. Why do you think she loves the bus so much, and why is it important to her spirit? Is Mumfrey right to worry about Valory’s safety?
7. In Chapter 8, Rook says he loved his Ji-Ji’s stories, even though his mom worried they would scare him. Why did the stories not scare him?
8. We meet Bruno in Chapter 8. Why did Rook’s acceptance into the Young Maestros affect their friendship? What does this tell you about Bruno?

CHAPTERS 11–15

9. In Chapter 11, Valory says fake courage is as good as real courage. Do you agree or disagree? What is the difference between fake courage and real courage?
10. In Chapter 12, Ms. Smith lists dangers that children face every day. Why is it worth having a child face these dangers?
11. In Chapter 14, Rook believes that being in trouble is bad, but hiding under the covers is worse. What does he mean by this? Do you agree or disagree?
12. In Chapter 15, Rook and Valory disagree about what the idea of a “big life” is. Why do you think they have such different points of view on what a successful adulthood would look like? Who do you agree with? Explain.

CHAPTERS 16–20

13. In Chapter 16, Ms. Smith says, “I wish to be fully honest and open, at least about the things I can be honest and open about.” Do you think this statement of hers is truly “fully honest and open”? Is telling only part of the truth still a lie? Does it make a difference if you announce that’s what you’re doing?
14. In Chapter 17, Valory visits a playground and says she sometimes misses being a little kid. She envies the children climbing and playing tag. Do you miss being younger? What do you miss?
15. When Rook lets Valory into the house in Chapter 18, he wonders if he should “keep an eye on her” (especially when she pauses in front of the coin collection), but then he hates himself for thinking that way. Why does he feel he should watch her? Why does he hate himself? Is he right to hate himself?
16. In Chapter 19, Valory says that Rook has some posters of “old composer guys” on his wall, but how do these composers inspire Rook? What traits did these composers have that are worth looking up to? What kind of people do you look up to, and why?

CHAPTERS 21-25

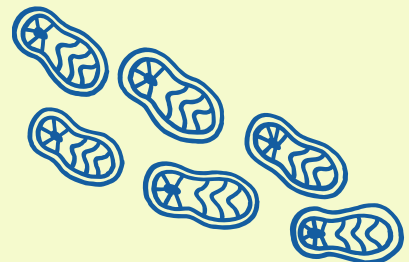
17. At the end of Chapter 21, Valory makes a big decision, one that feels like “stepping off a cliff.” List 2-3 reasons why she should not go into the Goblin Woman’s apartment. List 2-3 reasons why she should.
18. In Chapter 23, Elizabeth says that Dolly was the one who wrote the note for help. What does that tell you about Elizabeth at this point?
19. In Chapter 23, Elizabeth says she’s “invisible” and Valory is confused. What does Elizabeth mean by “invisible”?
20. At the end of Chapter 24, Rook climbs down the tree from the balcony. Why is this an especially brave thing for him to do? Why did he refuse to climb down the tree in Chapter 10, and what has changed?

CHAPTERS 26-30

21. The first couple of pages in Chapter 26 are full of exaggerated writing (hyperbole). Find five examples. Why do you think the author chose to use these sorts of exaggeration here?
22. In Chapter 30, Rook’s mom shares some of the reasons why she pushed him the way she does. Does knowing her reasons make her actions throughout the book more forgivable? Why or why not?

FINAL QUESTIONS

23. Rook describes, throughout the book, his anxiety and even learns a name for what he is feeling: agoraphobia. What does the book show you about agoraphobia and those who suffer from it? Use evidence from the book to support your thoughts.
24. Throughout the book, Valory has nicknames for people, including Dastardly Dan, Madame PP, Goblin Woman, Piano Boy, and His Royal Burkinness. What nickname do you think Valory would have given herself?
25. The book alternates between Valory’s and Rook’s perspectives. Which of the two is your favorite character? Would you prefer the whole book to be written from the point of view of just one of them?
26. Valory is often looked at as a “bad influence,” but by the end of the book, she has influenced many characters in good ways. Who did Valory influence and how?
27. The title of the book is *Sneaks*. Based on the ending, who is the 'biggest' sneak in the story, and is 'sneaking' always a bad thing?



ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

PREDICTIONS

In Chapter 6, both Rook and Valory have different predictions about what is going on. What is your prediction? Use evidence from the story to support your prediction.

Throughout the story update your prediction. Times in the story that may change predictions:

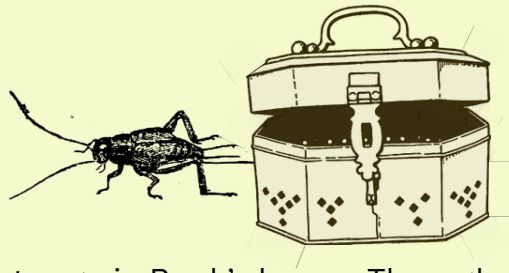
Examples:

- The first time we hear Ms. Smith, in Chapter 7, she flinches when someone notices she is carrying a doll.
- In Chapter 8, we learn that Ms. Smith has rearview mirrors that she wears on her hat.

After finishing the book, check your prediction(s). Were you right or wrong? What clues did you miss?

Evidence from the text ↓

First prediction (after reading Chapter 6)	
My updated prediction based on a new clue on page____	
My updated prediction based on a new clue on page____	
My updated prediction based on a new clue on page____	
My updated prediction based on a new clue on page____	
Prediction check (Were you right or wrong?)	



WRITE A FREE-VERSE POEM

In Chapter 19, Valory and Rook find a cricket cage in Rook’s house. Throughout the book, the characters sometimes feel trapped or “caged” because they aren’t allowed to do what they want or to make their own choices.

Option 1: LOVE

“Love is not a cage” is repeated throughout the book in various contexts. Use this saying as a starting point to write a free-verse poem about love – what it is and what it is not.

Option 2: CAGED AND FREE

Start by filling out the table below. Scavenge in the book for six more words or phrases, three that represent feeling trapped or “caged,” and three that represent a sense of freedom.

Then, pick someone from the book and write a free-verse poem about what makes that character feel caged and/or free. Use at least six words from the table.

CAGE WORDS

FREEDOM WORDS

Chores	Listening to the Trees
Rules	Riding the bus
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Think more about words:

- For Rook, is music a “cage word” or a “freedom word”?
- For Valory, is school a “cage word” or a “freedom word”?
- For Elizabeth, is school a “cage word” or a “freedom word”?

RULES OF BRAVERY

In Chapter 11, Valory explains her two rules of bravery, and Rook thinks he has come up with a third.

Write out your own rules of bravery. Include an explanation just like Valory did when she shared the rules with Rook.

SIMILES

The author uses similes throughout the book to add description. Find your favorite simile in the book and create a literal and figurative illustration of the simile.

Simile: _____

Literal	Figurative

ESSAYS

Option 1: There are three very different mothers in this book. They all try to do what they believe is best for their child, but sometimes they make mistakes. Pick one of the moms and write a character analysis essay, sharing your thoughts on them as a person and a parent.

Option 2: In Chapter 4, Rook wonders when everything got so intense. As is the case with many kids, his life is filled with competition and pressure. Interview an adult in your family about childhood pressures when they were young. Write an argumentative essay about whether or not childhood has gotten harder than it used to be.



This guide was created by Kellee Moye, a middle school librarian in a Florida Power Library designated school in Orlando, FL. Kellee is the author of various educators' guides for all levels; the co-author of the blog Unleashing Readers; Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (ALAN) 2024 President and a member of the 2016-2018 Board of Directors; administrative assistant for the 2026 Caldecott Award Committee; a jury member then co-chair of the 2020-2021 Schneider Family Award Jury; a member then chair of the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Book Award committee from 2012-2014; and a member of ALAN, AASL, ALA, and FAME. Kellee can be reached at Kellee.Moye@gmail.com and [@kelleemoye](https://www.instagram.com/kelleemoye).