

The **SECRET** of the **NIGHT TRAIN**

SYLVIA BISHOP

ILLUSTRATED BY MARCO GUADALUPI

About these resources

This pack begins with questions about the whole book, suitable for a book club. It then contains, by chapter:

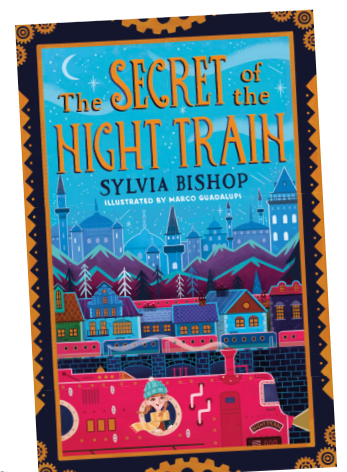
Discussion questions

For whole class responses, book clubs, etc.

Comprehension questions

Suitable for guided reading sessions
or for written work.

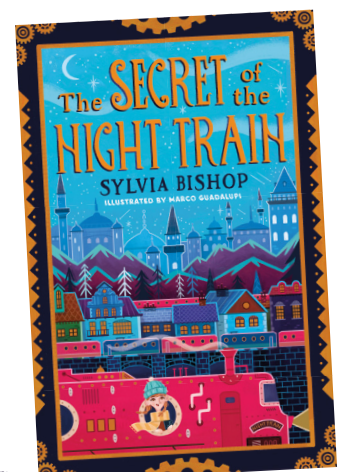
Writing exercises



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Whole book questions

1. Max overcomes her homesickness in this book.
Have you ever felt homesick?
Was it like Max's feelings, or different?
2. At the end, Sister Marguerite talks about the opposite of homesickness – wanderlust. Have you ever felt this?
3. Which of the parts of the journey would you most like to see yourself?
4. Did you guess the solution to the mystery?
If so, what clues did you pick up on?
If not, how were you thrown off the scent?
5. We see how the story ends for all of the major characters.
Did you feel satisfied with everybody's ending?
6. Who was your favourite character? Why?



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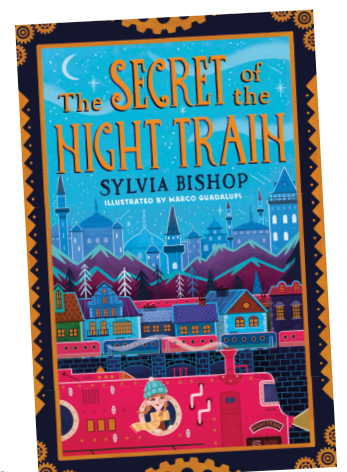
Chapter 1. The Beginning

Discussion questions

- Max is going further from home than she ever has before. So far, we haven't been told much about how she is feeling. How do you think she might be feeling?

Comprehension questions

1. The story begins in the middle of the plot, rather than right at the start. Why do you think the writer did this? What effect does it have?
2. The writer describes December as 'bitter'. What does the word 'bitter' mean in this context?
3. What train is Max Morel sitting on in this short chapter?
4. Summarise what we learn in this short chapter.
5. What do you think will happen next? Why do you think this?



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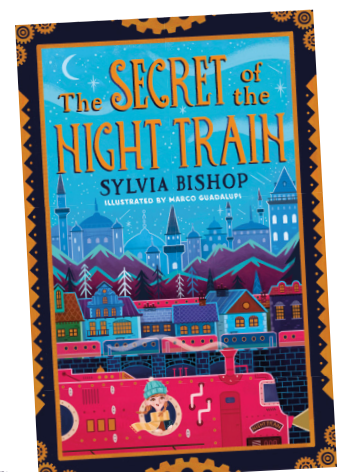
Chapter 2: The Very Beginning

Discussion questions

- What sort of person does Max seem like?
- What do you think of Max's family?
- Have you ever felt homesick?
Was it like the author's description in this chapter, or different?

Comprehension questions

1. What does Max have to drink when she gets home?
2. In this chapter, the author describes Max's hideaway in the attic. What impression of this setting do you get from this description? Identify the words or phrases that create this impression.
3. Max has an older sister and an older brother. What are their names?
4. Towards the end of the chapter, the Morel family have dinner together. Summarise everything that happens during dinner in your own words.
5. Max's mother describes the situation with Great-Aunt Elodie as 'tiresome'. What does the word 'tiresome' mean?
6. Max repeats her offer to visit Great-Aunt Elodie multiple times. Why does the author use repetition here?
7. What four items does Great-Aunt Elodie send to Max?
8. In this chapter, the author introduces Sister Marguerite for the first time. What does the writer's description of her suggest about what kind of character she is? - EXPLAIN



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Chapter 2: The Very Beginning

Comprehension questions (cont.)

9. Describe, in your own words, how Max feels the night before she leaves? How do you know that she feels this way?
10. At the end of the chapter, Max and Sister Marguerite leave. What do you think will happen next? Why?

Writing exercise

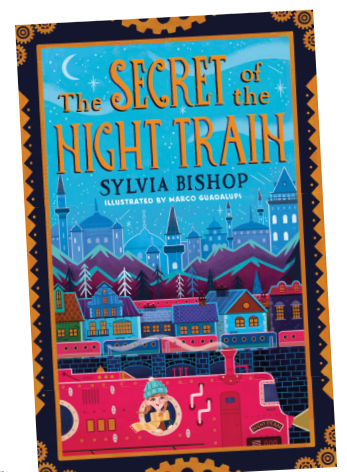
In this chapter, Max makes notes about the cities she will be visiting. Pick one of the cities and research it yourself, then write a page from Max's notebook.

Tips for planning

- First, brainstorm what you would want to know about, if you were visiting the city. Try and think of at least three different topics
- Do your research. Think about how you will record the information you find, so that you can easily find it afterwards.

Tips for writing

- Remember, the information needs to be clearly laid out. You might use underlined headings, and bullet points or numbered lists.



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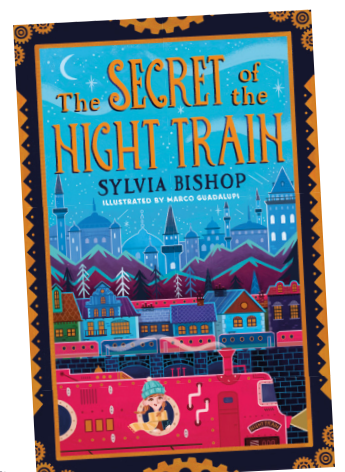
Chapter 3: Paris to Munich

Discussion questions

- Would you like travelling with Sister Marguerite? Why/why not?
- Max is looking for a possible thief, and so far we have met one other passenger: Rupert Nobes. Do you think he is suspicious? Why/why not?

Comprehension questions

1. Sister Marguerite is wearing a nun's 'habit'. What does the word 'habit' mean in this context?
2. Sister Marguerite takes some strange items out of her habit. Identify three of the items she takes out.
3. The train is delayed and the people around Max are 'muttering and eyebrow-raising'. What impression of Max's fellow passengers do you get from the author's description of them?
4. Part way through the chapter, the writer inserts a newspaper report about the theft of the Heartbreak Diamond. Why do you think the writer has presented the information as a newspaper article? What effect does this have on the reader?
5. Summarise the newspaper report in your own words. What are the key details?
6. What does the Heartbreak Diamond look like? Describe it in your own words.
7. The thieves believed to be behind the theft of the Heartbreak Diamond are called the 'Phantoms'. What does the word 'phantom' mean in this context?
8. In this chapter, the author describes Commandant Le Goff for the first time. What kind of character do you think he is based on the writer's description? Find three words or phrases that suggest this.



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Chapter 3: Paris to Munich

Comprehension questions

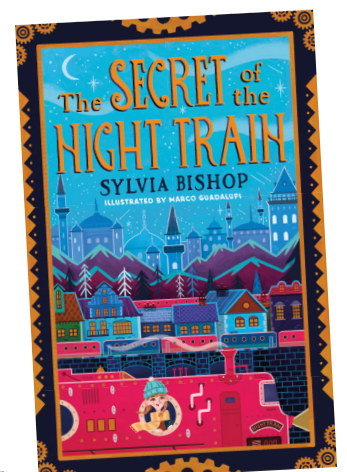
9. Max decides to try and solve the case of the missing Heartbreak Diamond. She begins investigating the passengers on the train with her. Summarise her investigation up to the end of the chapter.
10. At the end of the chapter, Max and Sister Marguerite arrive in Munich. What do you think will happen next? Why?

Writing exercise

In this chapter, we read a newspaper article about the ninth theft by a group called the Phantoms. Write your own newspaper article, imagining one of the earlier thefts.

Tips for planning

- Re-read the newspaper article. Note down anything you notice about the kind of information it includes, or the style of the writing
- Now start inventing your own theft. Newspaper articles should answer the 5 Ws: What, when, where, who, and why. So in your plan, think about:
 - > What was stolen?
 - > When was it stolen?
 - > Where was it stolen from?
 - > Who stole it?
 - > Why was it stolen?



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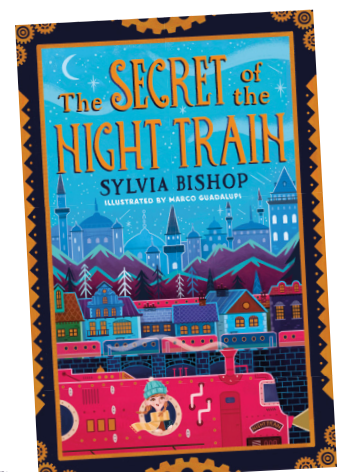
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Chapter 3: Paris to Munich

Writing exercise (cont.)

Tips for writing

- When you're ready to start writing, remember the key features of a newspaper article:
 - > It will need a short, punchy headline
 - > It should be in the third person
 - > It should be in the past tense
- You might want to include quotes from people you have interviewed, and a picture with a caption



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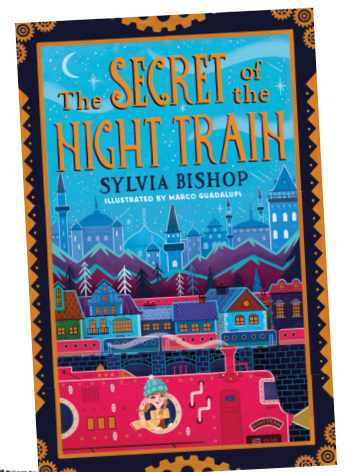
Chapter 4. Munich to Budapest

Discussion questions

- Max has five suspects by the end of the chapter, including her own friend. Who do you suspect? Why?
- Do you think you would like to travel by sleeper train?

Comprehension questions

1. Max and Sister Marguerite have ‘schnitzel’ in Munich. What does the author explain that ‘schnitzel’ is?
2. On the train to Munich, Max notes down which of her suspects are still with her. Which four suspects does she notice?
3. In this chapter, Max meets Klaus and Ester, two of her suspects, properly. What kind of character do you think Ester is based on the writer’s description of her? Find three words or phrases that support this.
4. What kind of character do you think Klaus is based on the author’s description of him? Find three words or phrases that support this.
5. Max finds a letter in the red-headed woman’s suitcase that tells her to ‘take great care’. What does the word ‘care’ mean in this context?
6. At the end of the chapter, Max has been caught snooping in Sister Marguerite’s suitcase. What do you think will happen next? Why do you think this?
7. In what order does Max search her fellow passengers’ suitcases? She looks through five suitcases in total.
8. The author ends the chapter on a cliff-hanger. What effect does this choice have on the reader?



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Chapter 4. Munich to Budapest

Writing exercise

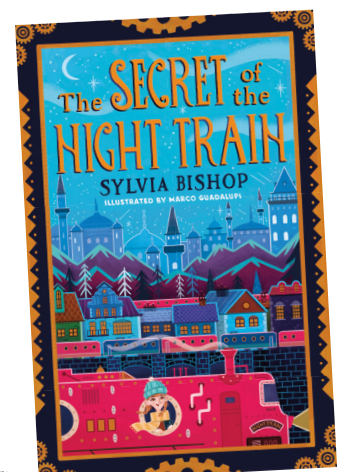
In this chapter, we meet some of the suspects in Max's investigations. Imagine there is one more suspect on the train, and write a passage introducing them.

Tips for planning

- Re-read the passage beginning 'The voice was speaking French' and ending 'This up here is Max.' Notice that the author does not say 'This character is rude' or 'this character is scary' – instead, she shows us what they are like.
- While reading the passage, think about:
 - > What features of the two new characters does the author describe?
What does this suggest about the kind of people they are?
 - > The two new characters also speak.
What do we learn about them from the things they say?
- Brainstorm ideas for your character:
 - > What kind of person are they?
 - > How could you suggest this in the way you describe them?
 - > How can you suggest this with the things they say?

Tips for writing

- Your piece should be in third person and past tense, to fit in with the rest of the story
- Remember to use new paragraphs when someone speaks.



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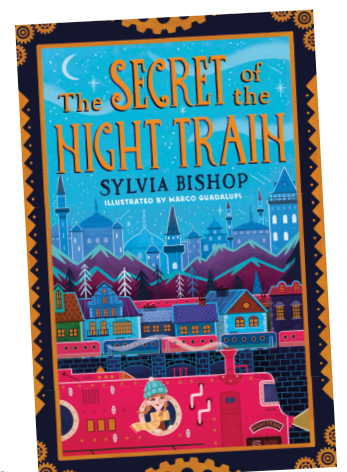
Chapter 5: Breakfast in Budapest

Discussion questions

- Do you trust Sister Marguerite? Why/why not?
- What impression do you have of Budapest so far?

Comprehension questions

1. What does the ‘cold-hard-something’ that Max felt on her neck turn out to be?
2. How does Max feel when she thinks that Sister Marguerite might be a villain? Find the words or phrases that tell you Max feels this way.
3. The writer waits several pages to tell the reader whether Sister Marguerite is a villain or on Max’s side. What effect does this delay have on the reader? Why do you think the author has decided to keep the reader waiting?
4. Sister Marguerite explains herself to Max over breakfast. In your own words, summarise what Sister Marguerite tells Max.
5. Sister Marguerite and Max have pastries for breakfast in Budapest. The author explains that one of the pastries is called kakaós csiga, and the author translates this into English. What does kakaós csiga mean in English?
6. Sister Marguerite explains to Max that the Phantoms are getting ‘paranoid’ about being watched. What does the word ‘paranoid’ mean?
7. Sister Marguerite describes how one of the Phantoms’ ‘heists’ was ‘foiled’. What does the word ‘heist’ mean?
8. What does the word ‘foiled’ mean?



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Chapter 5: Breakfast in Budapest

Comprehension questions (cont.)

9. By the end of the chapter, you have read everything Max and Sister Marguerite know so far. Based on this information, who do you think the thief/thieves will turn out to be? Why?
10. At the end of the chapter, Max and Sister Marguerite split up to follow different suspects. What do you think will happen next? Why?

Writing exercise

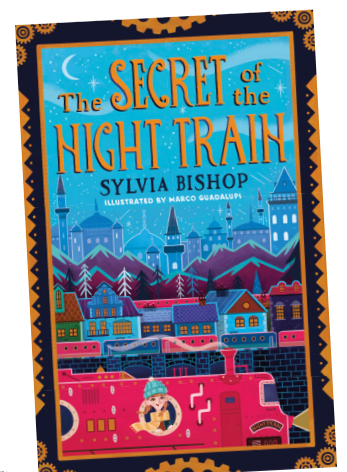
In this chapter, Max finds out about Marguerite's secret identity. Write a diary entry from Max's point of view, exploring how she feels about this:

Tips for planning

- Write a bullet point list of the key things that happen in the chapter
- Using your imagination, brainstorm how Max might feel about it. Here are some questions to get you started:
 - > Do you think she is sure she can trust Sister Marguerite?
 - > Does she mind that the nun was keeping secrets?
 - > How does she feel about being part of a secret mission?

Tips for writing

- Remember, a diary entry is in the first person, and in the past tense.



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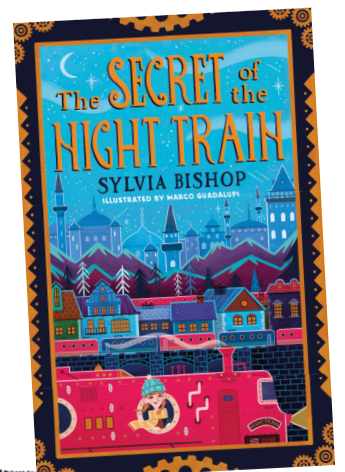
Chapter 6: Marek, Marek and Ruszy

Discussion questions

- Do you think Max's adventures sound fun or scary?
What are we learning about the kind of person Max is?
- Do you have any theories about who Klaus might be?

Comprehension questions

1. What are the full names of Marek, Marek and Ruszy?
2. The author describes the people Max is following, Ester and Klaus, as her 'quarry'.
What does the word 'quarry' mean in this context?
3. How does the doorman at Marek, Marek and Ruszy's office feel about Max?
Identify the words or phrases that tell you he feels this way.
4. Max eavesdrops on Ester and Klaus's meeting with Istvan Marek.
The meeting is happening in English, a language Max only speaks a little, so she can only understand parts of their conversation.
Why do you think the author makes it so difficult for Max to understand what is happening?
What effect does this have on the reader?
5. Max briefly loses Ester and Klaus, when they leave the lawyers' office, but finds them again and continues following them.
How do you think Max feels when she spots Ester and Klaus again, after losing them?
How do you know she feels this way?
6. Chapter 6 ends with a question: 'who was Klaus Grob?'
What is the effect of ending the chapter on a question?
7. Summarise this chapter in a few sentences, in your own words.
8. Where do you think Ester and Klaus will lead Max next? Why?



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Chapter 6: Marek, Marek and Ruszy

Writing exercise

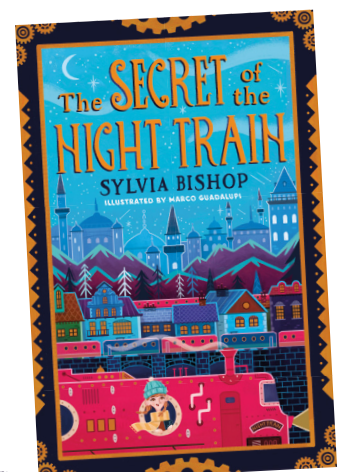
In this chapter, Max sneaks through the streets of Budapest. Choose another city in the world, and find images of it online. Imagine Max was following Ester and Klaus in this city instead, and write a few paragraphs describing this.

Tips for planning

- Re-read the passage from ‘They set off down a busy main road...’ and ending ‘... not wanting to get too close.’ Notice how the author mixes description and action together. If you have a photocopy of the page, you might like to underline these in different colours
- Look at images of your city online and brainstorm what you might describe. Think about:
 - > How is it different to your home town?
What would you notice most, if you were visiting for the first time?
 - > Would it be an easy place to follow someone without being seen, or a difficult place?
What would you need to do?
 - > The author says the buildings in Budapest are ‘like fondant fancies’. This is a simile. Can you think of any similes you might use?

Tips for writing

- Remember, as well as describing the city, you will need to describe what Max is doing and feeling as she hurries down the road behind Ester and Klaus



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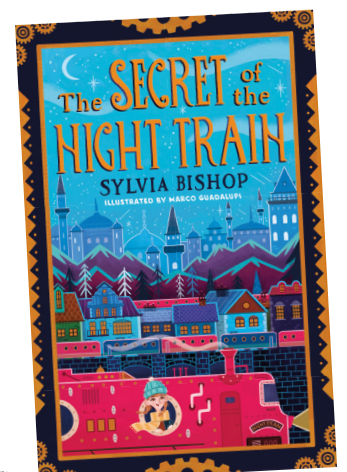
Chapter 7: The Széchenyi Baths

Discussion questions

- Max is lost without Ester and Klaus, and nearly misses the train. Have you ever been lost? Do you recognise the description of how Max felt here? How would you describe it?
- Now you have read three chapters set in Budapest. What stands out to you? Would you like to visit?

Comprehension questions

1. Max follows Klaus and Ester to a picnic bench near an ice rink, where they have lunch. Ester is suddenly frightened by something and runs away from their table. What is it that scares Ester?
2. Ester and Klaus enter a building and Max follows them inside. All of the signs are in a language Max does not understand, and so is everything the receptionist says to her. What effect does this have on the reader? Why does the author choose to give the reader bits and pieces of information?
3. The author describes the building from the outside and then, when Max follows Ester and Klaus inside, the author describes the interior too. The building turns out to be heated public baths. What do these descriptions of the building suggest about the setting? Does this seem like a nice place? Does Max like it? How do you know?
4. Look back to the description of Marek, Marek and Ruszy's office in Chapter 6. How is the lawyers' office described? and how are the baths described? Note two similarities and two differences.
5. Max initially chooses a 'strawberry red' swimming costume but then changes to a 'more forgettable navy' when she 'remembered she was a secret detective.' Why do you think she changes her mind?
6. The author describes how the cold air turns the warm water into 'vapour'. What does the word 'vapour' mean?



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Chapter 7: The Széchenyi Baths

Comprehension questions (cont.)

7. Max pretends to be a 'submarine' to spy on Ester and Klaus in the baths. What does the word 'submarine' mean?
8. Describe in your own words what Klaus's tattoo looks like?
9. Max's mood changes as she waits for Ester and Klaus.
Find three examples of words and phrases that show this shift in mood.
10. Summarise everything that happens at the baths, in your own words. - SUMMARISE
11. At the end of the chapter, Celeste guides Max back to the Budapest train station.
What do you think will happen next? Why do you think this?

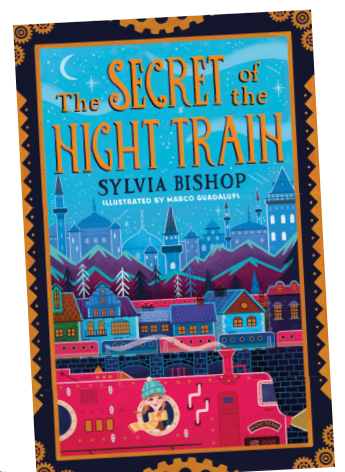
Writing exercise

In this chapter, Max walks back to the station with Celeste. Celeste found Max's suitcase for her earlier; she has been bothered by Rupert during the day; and finally, she has found Max, lost in the dark.

Earlier, she received a letter from someone called M (look back at Chapter 3 to remind yourself). Write an informal letter from Celeste to M about her journey so far.

Tips for planning

- Brainstorm how you imagine Celeste feeling, and what she might want to say:
 - > Is she enjoying the journey?
 - > Did she like Budapest?
 - > What does she think of the other passengers?



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Chapter 7: The Széchenyi Baths

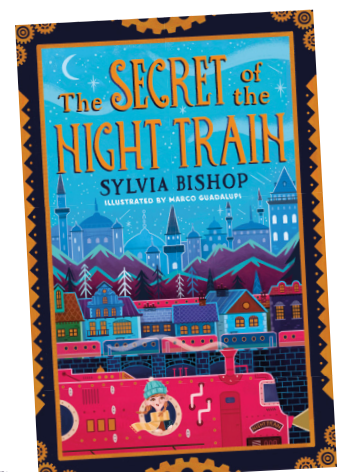
Writing exercise (cont.)

Tips for planning (cont.)

- > M told her to take great care. We don't know why yet, so you can imagine for yourself what they might be up to. How does Celeste feel about it?

Tips for writing

- Remember the layout of a letter:
 - > The sender's address, and the date, should go at the top right hand corner
 - > Open with a greeting: 'Dear name,'
 - > Write in the first person
 - > Choose an appropriate way to end the letter.
As Celeste seems to be friendly with M, this might be an informal ending



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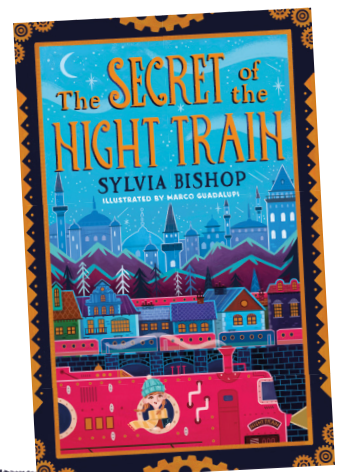
Chapter 8: Budapest to Bucharest

Discussion questions

- We have learned a lot more about all the suspects in this chapter. Who do you suspect now? Why?
- Marguerite tells Max that she is safe, and that the nun is taking care of her. Would this reassure you? Why/why not?

Comprehension questions

1. The author describes how Max ‘wolfed’ down her sandwich. What does the word ‘wolfed’ mean in this context?
2. Max describes Klaus’s tattoo to Sister Marguerite, who recognises it as the symbol of a gang called ‘The Iron Hand’. What impression do you get of the Iron Hand? Find the words or phrases that give you this impression.
3. Max and Sister Marguerite’s opinions of Klaus change drastically in this chapter. Find the words or phrases that show this change.
4. While Max followed Ester and Klaus, Sister Marguerite followed Rupert. Summarise, in your own words, what Sister Marguerite saw Rupert do.
5. Sister Marguerite describes seeing Rupert ‘mooning’ after Celeste. What does the word ‘mooning’ mean in this context?
6. Max sees ‘a shadowy figure’ outside on the station platform and overhears their conversation on the station payphone. Who is this ‘shadowy figure’?
7. Read what Max sees and hears while eavesdropping on the phone call. What do you think the phone call was about? Why?



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Chapter 8: Budapest to Bucharest

Comprehension questions (cont.)

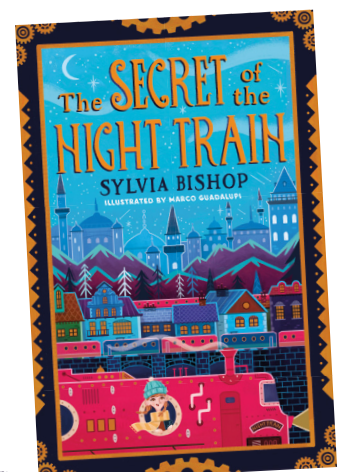
8. Ester and Klaus have decided Ester will sleep in Max and Marguerite's car for the night. Why does Ester say she needs to sleep in their car instead of her own?
9. The author slowly reveals pieces of information about who fell off the train. What effect does releasing this information so slowly have on the reader?
10. How does Ester know Max's Great-Aunt Elodie?
11. The chapter ends with Sister Marguerite faking an illness and Klaus insisting on escorting her back to her car, leaving Max with Ester in the restaurant car. What do you think will happen next? Why?

Writing exercise

Who do you think the thief is? Using what you have learned so far, write a persuasive speech arguing your case.

Tips for planning

- First, brainstorm the evidence you will use. You can use Max's notes in this chapter to remind yourself of key information – can you think of anything else?
- Plan how you will organise this information into separate paragraphs that the reader can follow clearly.



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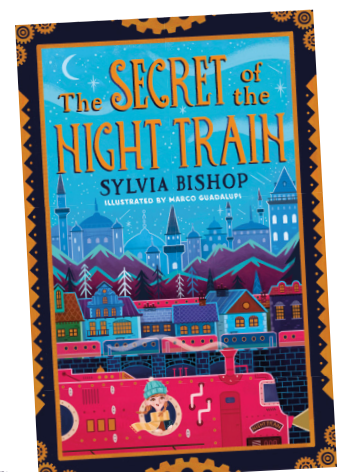
Chapter 8: Budapest to Bucharest

Writing exercise (cont.)

Tips for writing

The aim of this writing is persuade. Remember:

- Open with a clear statement of your position
- You can use strong, emotive language to persuade your reader
- You might want to use rhetorical questions
- You might want to appeal directly to your audience, e.g. “Do you think...” “We all know...”, etc



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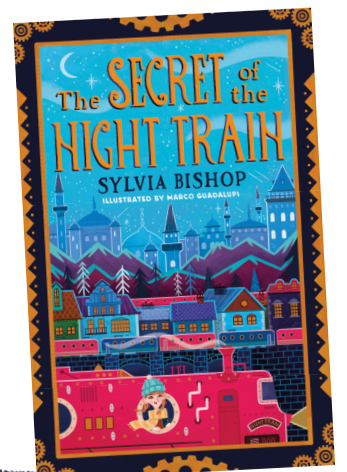
Chapter 9: Bucharest to Istanbul

Discussion questions

- Things are now at their worst point so far for Max. How does reading this chapter make you feel?
- Do you think the ending of this chapter is good news or bad news?

Comprehension questions

1. How long do the passengers have between leaving the Ister train and boarding the Bosfor train?
2. How does Max feel when she finds Sister Marguerite has missed the Bosfor train to Istanbul? How do you know Max feels this way?
3. Based on what you know so far, why do you think Marguerite missed the train?
4. What creature does Max catch inside a jellybean jar?
5. Max slips into Ester and Klaus's cabin and begins searching through Ester's suitcase. The writer spends a whole paragraph listing everywhere Max looks and everything she sees in the suitcase. What effect does this use of detail have?
6. After Max is soaked in Ester's perfume, what does she decide to do, in your own words? Why does she choose to do this?
7. What effect does the passage where Max climbs along the roof of the train have on the reader? Identify three words and/or phrases that create this effect
8. Max's mood changes throughout this chapter. Identify two words or phrases that suggest how Max is feeling when she climbs back into the train.
9. How does Max open the secret compartment in Ester's suitcase?



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Chapter 9: Bucharest to Istanbul

Comprehension questions (cont.)

10. The author describes how Ester began to ‘bellow at the top of her appalling lungs’. What do the words ‘bellow’ and ‘appalling’ mean in this context?
11. At the end of the chapter, Sister Marguerite is still missing, and Max has been caught snooping through Ester’s jewels.
What do you think is going to happen next?
Why do you think this?

Writing exercise

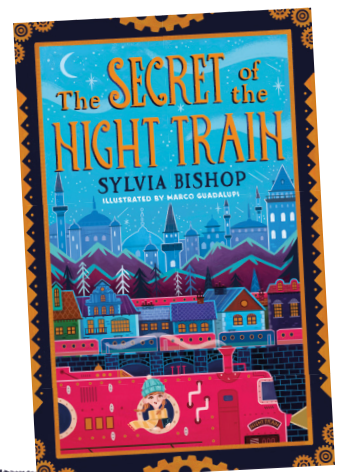
In this chapter, Max shares a carriage with a woman who does not speak her language. Write the scene from her point of view, in the first person.

Tips for planning

- Re-read the passage from “There was one other person in the car...” to “She set off down the corridor once more”. Note down what happens
- Brainstorm what the ‘lady dressed all over in a powdery purple’ might think and feel about this. To get you started, you could ask yourself:

Tips for writing

This is a first person piece, so it uses ‘I’. To really bring your piece to life, think about how the lady in purple might talk, and try and write it in her voice. This might mean using words and phrases which you wouldn’t normally use.



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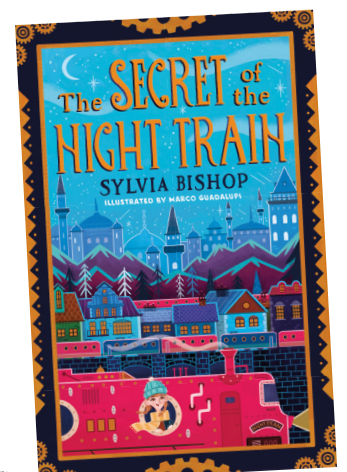
Chapter 10: Istanbul at Dawn

Discussion questions

- Now we know who the thief was! Did you see this coming?
- Not all questions have been resolved yet.
What questions do you still have about Max's suspects?

Comprehension questions

1. Where is Max being kept at the beginning of Chapter 10?
2. How does Max feel being kept in this place? How do you know she feels this way?
3. In the section of the text after Max falls asleep on the train, the author includes a lot of questions. What effect does the use of so many questions have?
4. Max is taken off the train and into a room in the station. The author describes the room. What impression do you get of the room from this description? Find some words or phrases make you think this.
5. Le Goff describes Sister Marguerite as Max's 'accomplice'. What does the word 'accomplice' mean?
6. What is hidden inside the bobble on the Max's hat?
7. Le Goff explains that Ester had her jewels with her because she was trying to move them 'incognito' to a more secure location after the bank robbery in Paris. What does the word 'incognito' mean?
8. In this chapter, Max meets her Great-Aunt Elodie for the first time. What impression of Great-Aunt Elodie does the reader get? What kind of person do you think Elodie is? Why?



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Chapter 10: Istanbul at Dawn

Comprehension questions

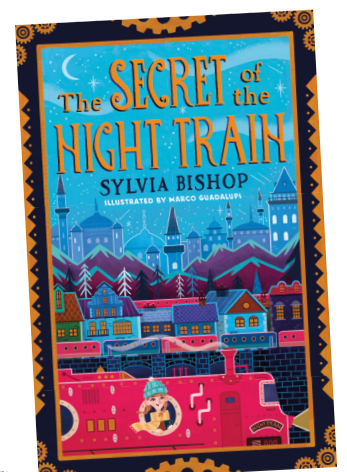
9. Max learns who the real thief is and uncovers many of the mysteries she was unable to solve. Summarise everything that Max learns about the mystery in this chapter, in your own words.
10. At the end of the chapter, Max is held prisoner as a suspected jewel thief and is hoping Sister Marguerite is her next visitor. What do you think will happen next? Why do you think this?

Writing exercise

In this chapter, Commandant Le Goff has arrested Max. Imagine that you are writing a formal letter to him to argue that she should be released. You need to persuade him that she is not guilty.

Tips for planning

- Plan the key points you need to make. For each point, you will write one paragraph.
- Hint: remember to think about the reasons why Le Goff might disagree with you and think that Max is guilty. These are called his counter-arguments. Your letter will be more persuasive if you can explain why his possible counter-arguments are wrong.



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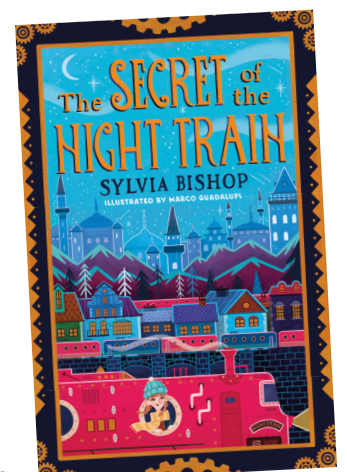
Chapter 10: Istanbul at Dawn

Writing exercise

Tips for writing

Remember the layout of a letter:

- The sender's address, and the date, should go at the top right hand corner
- Open with a greeting: 'Dear name,'
- Write in the first person
- Choose an appropriate way to end the letter. As this is a letter to somebody you don't know, you will need a formal ending



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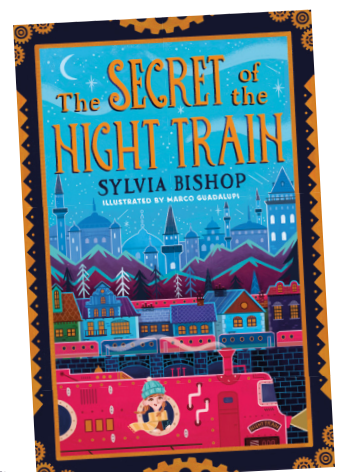
Chapter 11: Cupboard in Sirkeci Station

Discussion questions

- Max says she doesn't mind what bad things Klaus did in the past, although it is possible his crimes were serious. What do you think about this?
- Now we know who the thief was, and what Ester and Klaus were up to. Do you have any more questions that need to be resolved?

Comprehension questions

1. Based only on the title of this chapter, and what you know from the previous chapters, what do you think is going to happen in this chapter? Why?
2. The author describes Great-Aunt Elodie's 'porcelain smile'. What does the word 'porcelain' mean in this context?
3. In this chapter, Max and Sister Marguerite are reunited. How do you think both characters feel about this? Identify two words or phrases for each character (four words/phrases total) that suggest this is how they feel.
4. The reader knows that Max and Sister Marguerite are innocent. Other characters, like Le Goff, do not know this, and think that they are guilty. Why do you think the author has chosen to do this? What effect does the reader knowing more than some of the characters have?
5. Sister Marguerite explains what happened to her in Bucharest station. Why did Sister Marguerite miss the train?
6. Max receives her third and fourth visitors to the room she's locked in, after Aunt Elodie and Sister Marguerite. Who are these visitors?
7. Summarise the 4 escape plans they come up with.
8. At the end of the chapter, Le Goff has been put inside a cupboard. What do you think will happen next? Why?



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Chapter II: Cupboard in Sirkeci Station

Writing exercise

In this chapter, we learn that Klaus has a secret past, and his name is not really Klaus Grob. Imagine you are Klaus, and write a story about the day you decided to change your name and leave your old life behind.

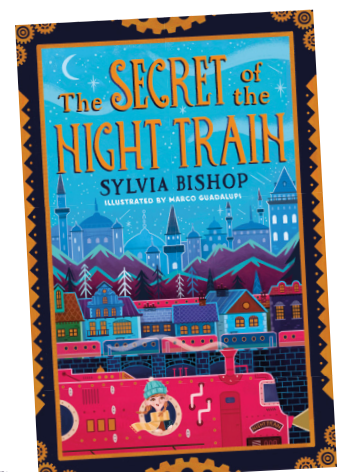
If you like, you could begin: These days I am called Klaus Grob, but that was not always my name. I used to live a very different life – until the day that changed my life forever.

Tips for planning

- For this piece of writing, you are not just describing a character or setting – it is your job to come up with the whole story. If you are stuck, you could ask yourself:
 - > What sort of work might Klaus have done for Die Eisenhande, a criminal gang?
 - > What might make him want to stop?

Tips for writing

- Even though you are telling a whole story, don't forget to use your descriptive skills to bring people and places alive
- This is a first person piece, so it uses 'I'. To really bring your piece to life, think about how Klaus might talk, and try and write it in his voice. This might mean using words and phrases which you wouldn't normally use.



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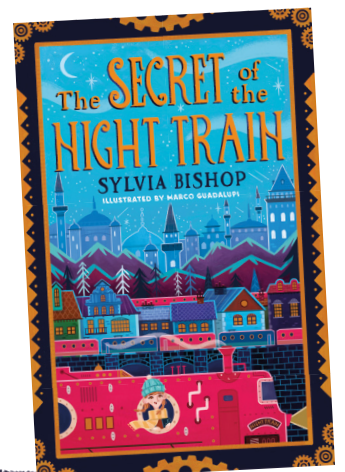
Chapter 12: Salem Sadik

Discussion questions

- Now we know the truth about all the characters. Who has surprised you the most?
- Rupert thinks that to ‘thieve from thieves’ is a kind of ‘justice’. What do you think about this?
- Max sees that Istanbul is both like and unlike home. Have you ever felt like this in a new place?

Comprehension questions

1. The author describes the Bosphorus Strait that divides Istanbul and connects two seas. Which two seas does it connect?
2. The author also describes that, on one side of the Bosphorus Strait, Istanbul is on one continent and, on the other side of the strait, it is in another continent. Which two continents are these?
3. The author spends a long paragraph, punctuated mostly with commas that keep the sentence going, describing Max, Sister Marguerite, Ester, and Klaus’s travels across Istanbul. What effect does this long, run-on paragraph have on the reader? Do you think their journey was quick and easy or long and tiring?
4. In this chapter, the writer introduces Salem Sadik. What does Salem’s description suggest about him? What kind of character do you think he is?
5. Max goes to sleep in Salem’s flat. Summarise what Max sees there and learns about Salem.
6. Max sees Salem’s café properly when she wakes up and goes downstairs. What does the description of that café in the evening suggest about it? What kind of place is the café?



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Chapter 12: Salem Sadik

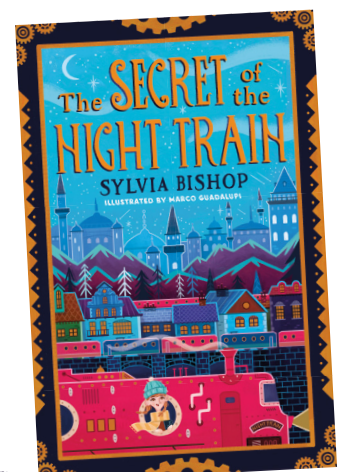
Comprehension questions (cont.)

7. Max is surprised to see Rupert at Salem's café and the writer describes how she 'gaped', 'gawped', and 'goggled'. What do these words mean in this context?
8. Rupert explains a technique for stealing called the Spider Trick. This trick is how he thinks Great-Aunt Elodie stole the diamond back from Le Goff. Explain the Spider Trick, in your own words.
9. The chapter ends with Max and her friends coming up with a plan to steal back the Heartbreak Diamond. What do you think will happen next? Why?

Writing exercise

In this chapter, all the characters are reunited at last in Salem's café. Write this scene as a scene from a play, starting from "So Max followed Salem, pas the muttering groups...". You can use the speech the author has written, or come up with your own.

- A play script only contains speech, and stage directions. You will find there is lots of extra information and description in the original version that you can leave out.
- No speech marks are used. Write the speakers name, a colon, and then the words they say.
- Stage directions tell us what should be on stage, and how the actors should move. They are in italic writing and written in the present tense
- There might also be instructions before a line to tell us how a line should be said, e.g. 'sadly' or 'shouting'.



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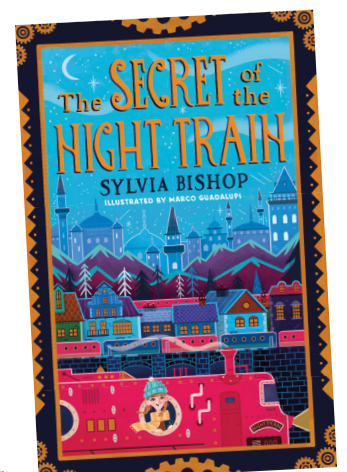
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Chapter 12: Salem Sadik

Writing exercise (cont.)

- Here is an example, based on chapter 11:
 - Commandant Le Goff leaves, looking the door. Ester, Klaus and Max look at each other a moment in silence.
 - Ester: (Loudly) We believe you!
 - Klaus: And we're sorry, Max, for getting you in trouble
 - Ester: Le Goff told us your story, and I say it makes sense.

When you have written these, you could try acting them out in groups, to see if your script is clear and can be followed to make a play!



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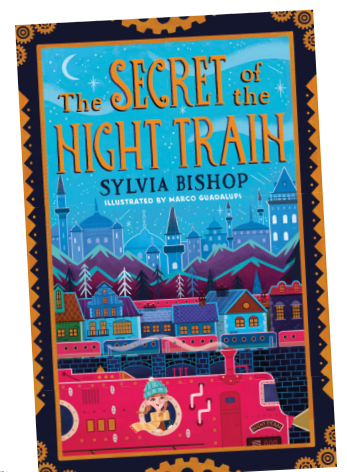
Chapter 13: The Admirer, the Rival, the Menace and the Child

Discussion questions

- How do you feel about the jewel encrusted birds?
Why do you think they have been included in this chapter?

Comprehension questions

1. The author describes Great-Aunt Elodie's house in this chapter. What impression does this description give of the house?
2. The author explains that 'today, there would be four' visitors to Great-Aunt Elodie's house. Who do you think these visitors will be?
3. The first visitor is described as 'the spurned admirer'.
What does the word 'spurned' mean?
4. How many roses does Rupert tell Suzanne (Celeste's real name) he has brought her?
5. This chapter is split into four parts by subtitles; 'The spurned admirer', 'The bitter rival', 'The real menace', and 'The child'. What is the effect of dividing the chapter in this way?
Why do you think the author has chosen to do it?
6. Summarise the section entitled 'The bitter rival', in your own words.
7. What kind of bush is Sister Marguerite hiding in?
8. In the first three sections – 'The spurned admirer', 'The bitter rival', and 'The real menace' – small parts of the story are told. In the final section, 'The child', all the sections are drawn together. What effect does this structure have?
9. Max finds out something terrible about the jewel-encrusted birds.
What does she discover?
10. Summarise the section entitled 'The child'. How do Max and her friends carry out her plan? How do all the different parts come together?



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Chapter 13: The Admirer, the Rival, the Menace and the Child

Comprehension questions (cont.)

11. The chapter ends with Sister Marguerite setting off the burglar alarm. What do you think the next step of Max's plan is? What do you think will happen next? Why?

Writing exercise

In this chapter, Max's aunt keeps caged birds with jewels on their feathers. This shows that she is both very rich, and very cruel.

Imagine that Max opens a door in the house on her way round, and finds some more pets. They should also reveal how rich and cruel her Aunt is.

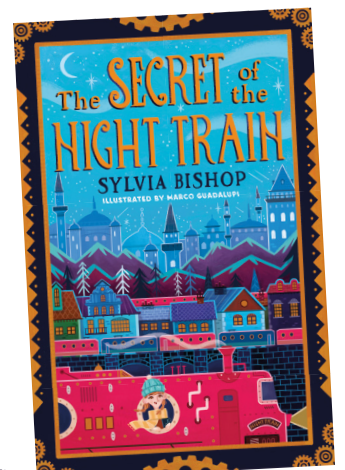
Tips for planning

- Choose your animal!
- Brainstorm how you might show this:
 - > What kind of things show that people are wealthy?
 - > What does your chosen animal need – what would be a cruel way to keep it?
- Re-read the passage from 'When the butler's tap-tap had retreated', until 'It closed its eyes'. Notice how the author includes:
 - > How the animal behaves
 - > How Max feels
 - > What Max does and says

Think about how you can include these three things in your piece.

Tips for writing

Remember, to fit in with the rest of the story, this piece should be in third person and past tense.



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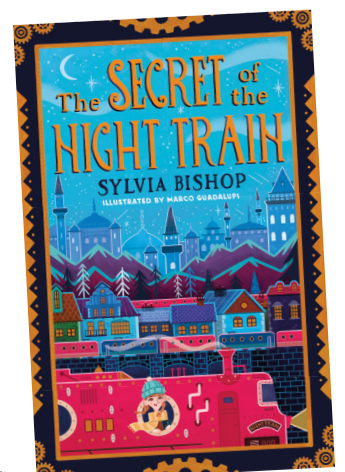
Chapter 14. Behind the Painting

Discussion questions

- In this chapter, Le Goff is proved wrong, and Great-Aunt Elodie is caught. For you, which of these two victories felt more important/interesting?
- Max's problems are now resolved. What else would you like to see happen, for her and the other characters, before the book is over?

Comprehension questions

1. At the beginning of this chapter, the police have arrived, and Max is hoping that they will find her. How does the reader feel at the opening of the chapter?
Find two words or phrases that make the reader feel this way.
2. The parrot next to Great-Aunt Elodie's portrait/safe repeats certain words.
Find three of the words or phrases that the parrot says.
3. Max warns Le Goff that, if he doesn't look in the safe, she is going to be 'difficult' when he arrests her. What does difficult mean in this context?
4. The chapter begins with the group finding Great-Aunt Elodie's safe, but the safe is not opened for several paragraphs. Why has the writer structured the chapter this way?
What effect does this delay have on the reader?
5. When the safe is finally opened, what do they find inside?
6. Great-Aunt Elodie makes up a lot of excuses for her parrot's incriminating vocabulary and what they find in her safe. Summarise Great-Aunt Elodie's excuses in your own words.
7. At the end of the chapter, Great-Aunt Elodie is caught out and Max's plan seems to have worked. What do you think will happen next? Why?



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Chapter 14. Behind the Painting

Writing exercise

In this scene, Max finally finds the diamond. Imagine that the diamond wasn't behind the painting, after all. Write this alternative scene.

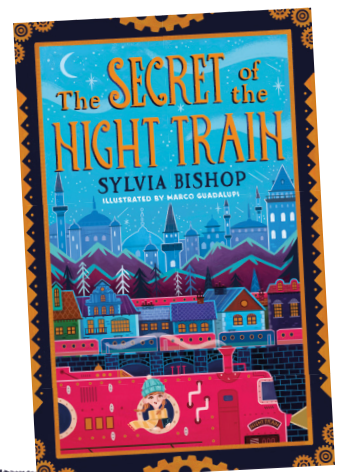
Tips for planning

- Re-read the chapter, up until 'They let her go, and she put fingertip to pad.' Make a note of who is present in this scene.
- Decide what you will have in the safe – does it contain something else, or is it empty? Now on your list, you can add your ideas about how each person will respond to this surprise.

Tips for writing

You can use the original scene as a guide:

- Notice that it is in the third person, and the past tense.
- Notice the mixture of speech, action and description.



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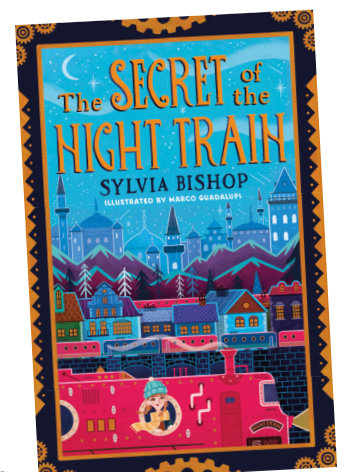
Chapter 15. Istanbul (properly)

Discussion questions

- We have now seen, through Max's eyes, three major settings: a day in Budapest, a morning waking up in Romanian countryside, and a day in Istanbul. Which would you most like to see for yourself, and why?
- Sister Marguerite repeats the phrase 'This first rule of travelling is, you have always left something behind'. Now that you've read the whole book, what do you think she means by this?

Comprehension questions

1. What happened to Great-Aunt Elodie and Suzanne after the end of the last chapter?
2. Salem tells stories about his late wife, Anne.
What kind of person does his description suggest she was?
3. Max has an idea, has a vague conversation with the police officers at Great-Aunt Elodie's house, and the idea is not revisited until later.
What do you think Max's idea was? Why?
4. In this chapter, Max gets to see Istanbul.
Summarise her day exploring with Sister Marguerite, Klaus and Rupert in your own words.
5. Where is Le Goff waiting for Max and Sister Marguerite to discuss their reward?
6. Think back to how Max felt in the first chapter. Think about how Max seems to feel in this chapter. How has her mood changed throughout the book?
How has she developed?
7. What was Max's idea from question 3?
8. The author describes Salem's 'glorious wall of birds in the window' of his café. What does the word 'glorious' mean in this context?



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Chapter 15. Istanbul (properly)

Writing exercise

In this chapter, Salem fills his café with beautiful singing birds. Write an advert for the bird-filled café.

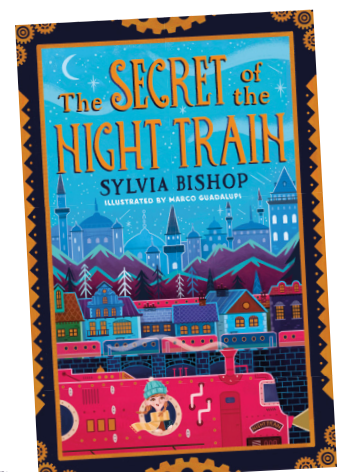
Tips for planning

- Brainstorm things that people might enjoy about this café. You can look back to chapter 12 for more details about what the café offers.
- Also brainstorm what they might need to know in order to find and use the café.

Tips for writing

You might want to use a blank piece of paper, so that you can lay out your advert clearly. Remember:

- Adverts should use short, memorable phrases.
- They are meant to persuade, so use strong adjectives and emotive language.
- You might want to use a variety of different letter sizes, and a picture.



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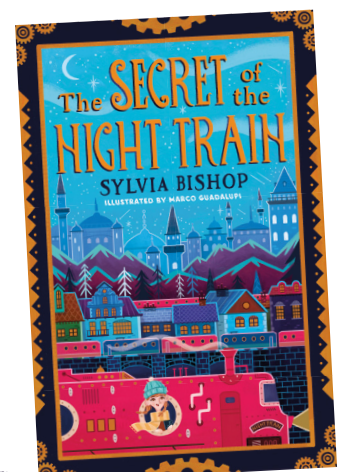
Chapter 16. Home

Discussion questions

- Max has mixed feelings about being home again. Can you relate to this?
- Sister Marguerite talks about ‘wanderlust’, the feeling of wanting to ‘go anywhere and do anything’. Have you ever felt wanderlust?

Comprehension questions

1. How does Max feel about flying in an aeroplane?
What words or phrases suggest that she feels this way?
2. When Max returns home, her family are all out. When Sister Marguerite leaves, she is home alone. Why do you think the author made this decision?
3. Summarise Max’s journey from Istanbul to her attic in your own words.
4. Max’s family members are all off doing their own activities when she arrives home. What is her brother busy doing? What is her sister doing?
5. Max repeats some of her actions from the first chapter, but with slight differences. For example, she goes up to the attic, just like she does at the beginning, but takes her travelling case with her because ‘it felt strange to be without it’. What effect does this similar but different structure have?
6. How do you think Max feels about being home after her travels?
What words or phrases tell you she feels this way?
7. Sister Marguerite tells Max, in her letter, that she may soon experience ‘wanderlust’. What does the word ‘wanderlust’ mean?
8. The book ends with Max having a well-earned rest.
What do you think Max will do next?
What will her next adventure be?
Why do you think this?



The SECRET of the NIGHT TRAIN

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Chapter 16. Home

Writing exercise

In this chapter, Max has mixed feelings about returning home. Write a free verse poem about the different emotions that 'home' brings for you. (If you prefer, you can choose somewhere else important to you.)

- Remember, a free verse poem doesn't need to rhyme, or have any particular structure. Lay it out on the page however you would like to!
- Start by brainstorming images you could use in your poem. Here are some ideas to get you started:
 - > Are there any objects in your house that evoke a particular emotion? E.g. for Max, the old red armchair is comfortable, but the heavy curtains make her feel shut in
 - > What would you say your home is like? Brainstorm similes and metaphors you could use
 - > What adjectives would you use to describe your home?
- Now experiment with putting these into a poem. Think about how it will make your reader feel. Can you make a vivid picture for them of what your home feels like? Can you surprise them with a really original image, which is unique to your home?

