



THE SECRET OF THE MOONSHARD

STRUAN MURRAY

ILLUSTRATED BY VIVIENNE TO

Educational Resource Pack – 4x Lesson Plans and Ideas

Suitable for: Ages 9+

Explore Themes of:

- ✓ Power and control: grappling with the consequences of authority, influence and manipulation
- ✓ Freedom: the struggle for autonomy and breaking free from constraints and confinement
- ✓ Identity: the journey to self-discovery and understanding one's place in the world
- ✓ Destiny vs. freewill: questioning predetermined paths and the power of choice
- ✓ Lies: uncovering truths and deceit and challenging established narratives
- ✓ Empathy and friendship: forging connections and understanding through shared experiences
- ✓ Dinosaurs: the wonder and awe of prehistoric creatures and their impact on the world
- ✓ The Moon: exploring the mysteries and symbolism of Earth's celestial companion

Subjects: ✓ English ✓ Science ✓ PSHE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Domino has lived her whole life believing that just one drop of magic could kill her.

Held in a floating laboratory by scheming Science Barons, she has never known a single day of freedom.

When Domino discovers that everything she's been told by the Barons is a lie, she escapes to Abzalaymon, a wondrous city filled with scientific marvels, hulking thunder lizards and hidden magic.

But the Barons are soon on Domino's trail. Because a war is brewing between science and magic. A war that could destroy the world. And Domino might just be the key to saving everyone.

The thrilling new magical adventure from Branford Boase winner Struan Murray.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR – STRUAN MURRAY

Struan Murray is Scottish and grew up in Edinburgh, the youngest of a large, rowdy family of redheads. His debut novel, *Orphans of the Tide*, won the prestigious Branford Boase Award, and was included in the Guardian's "Best children's books of 2020 for all ages." His latest novel, *The Secret of the Moonshard*, was Indie Book of the Month. When he's not writing, Struan is a lecturer at the University of Oxford.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR – VIVIENNE TO

Vivienne To is an illustrator and visual development artist. She has worked across feature films, television, commercials and children's publishing. She created concept art for animated movies such as *The Lego Movie* and *Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole* and was the art director on *The Lego Batman Movie*. She has illustrated several picture books including *The Sloth Who Came To Stay*, written by Margaret Wild, which was short-listed for the CBCA Award for New Illustrator. Vivienne was born in Melbourne, grew up in Sydney and lives in Wellington, New Zealand. When she isn't drawing, she can be found knitting on the couch, watching cute dogs at the local park or lost in the pages of a good book.





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NATIONAL CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND INNOVATIVE IDEAS



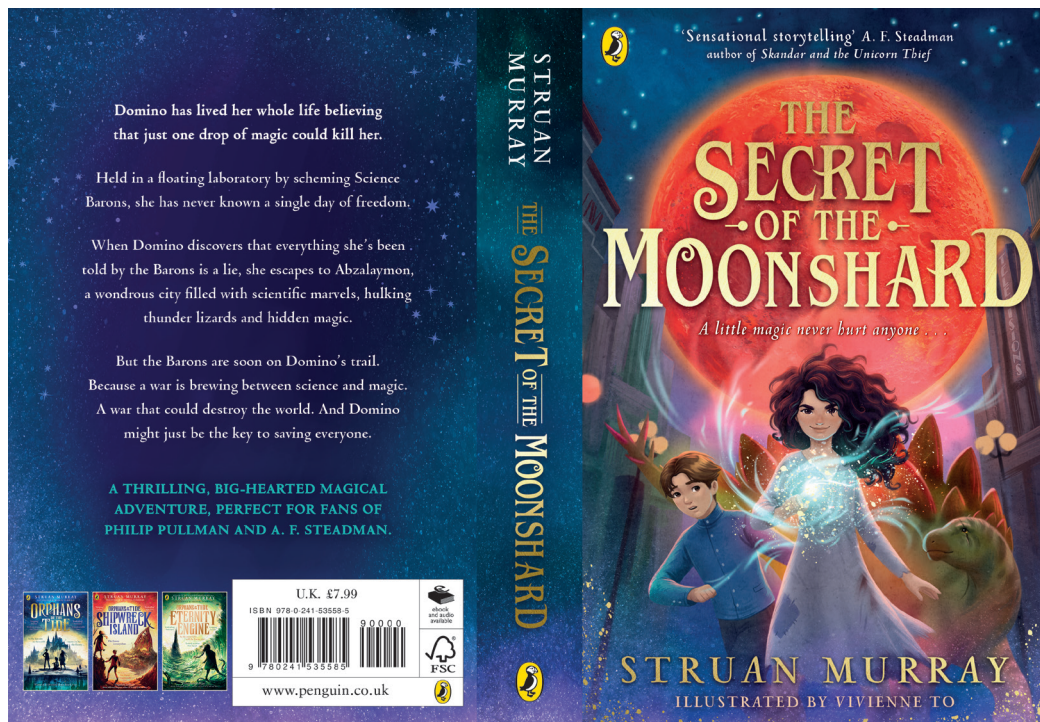


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FRONT COVER AND BLURB AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What immediately grabbed your attention when you first saw the front cover? Was it the red moon in the middle, the girl with the silver lines swirling from her finger, the boy, the dinosaur or something else?
2. Can you identify the author and illustrator? Find out their names by checking the front cover or back cover of the book. Have you read any other books by this author or illustrator before?
3. What do you think the relationship is between the girl, the boy and the dinosaur? What adventures await these characters? Where might their journey lead them? Predict what could happen in the story.
4. Based on what you see, what genre do you think the book is (e.g. mystery, fantasy, adventure)?
5. The title of the book is 'The Secret of the Moonshard.' Why do you think this title was chosen and how does it connect to what you see on the cover?
6. Find the tagline "A little magic never hurt anyone..." under the title on the front cover. How do you think magic will be important in the story? What lessons do you think they might learn about magic?
7. Take a close look at the background of the cover image. What details can you see? Where do you think the story takes place? Does it resemble a familiar setting or a fantastical world?
8. How do you think the cover images were made? Do you think they were hand-drawn or created using computer graphics? If you were the illustrator, how might you have designed the cover differently?
9. Now, let's read and explore the blurb of the book together. What intrigues you the most about the blurb and what questions do you have based on what you've read?
10. How do the cover and the blurb make you feel about reading the book? Do they leave you wanting to read more of it? Are you curious to find out what happens next? Why?



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EXTRACT 1A: MR HONEYWINKLE

(from CHAPTER 1 – A CRIME AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD: pages 1–2)

It was a cold morning among the clouds, and Mr Honeywinkle had only minutes to live.

Floating in the sky was a marble building as big as a mountain, propellers sprouting from it like metal sunflowers. Its roof was flat with a trapdoor at one edge, and if you had pressed your ear to it that morning you'd have heard the muffled thunder of footsteps, then brutal war cries, then a name, hurled like a curse:

'Domino!'

Sparrows scattered as the trapdoor slammed open and a girl burst out, a sack on her back and a crazed glint in her eye. She had a mane of black hair, wore a tattered grey dress, and was particularly tall for her age. She shivered as the wind wrapped around her, staring upward. The moon hung red in the sky, like a dollop of molten lava.

Fresh shouts swept up from below, howling for her head on a stake. The girl smiled and ran across the rooftop, swinging the sack down to her side. Overhead the moon had changed colour: from red to a deep emerald green.

EXTRACT 1B: DOMINO'S DEFIANCE

(from CHAPTER 2 – THE INVENTOR OF THE TELEVISION: pages 12–13)

'If you want me to stop doing things like this in future –'

He sprang forward. 'Was that a confession?'

'I said things like this in future. Let me go down to the city, sir. For an afternoon. Then I promise to always behave.'

He drummed his fingers irritably on the desk.

'I'll come straight back, sir. I'll have to come back.'

'You'll die before you come back.'

'You don't know that for sure. The magic –'

'Do you think this is a negotiation? You are not allowed to leave. You cannot leave, and – until we find a cure – you will never leave.'

He glared at Domino, and she glared back, until the force of his gaze made her blink. She noticed the jangle of metal at Garballous's belt: thirteen keys, her path to anywhere in the Scientarium Celestis, including straight out of it. But where could she go? How long would she last down in the city? The others were right – she was sick, and could never leave. She was trapped here, a thousand feet in the sky with fifty Science Barons and three hundred children, and every one of them hated her.

A hot rage itched all over Domino's body, and she nudged the clay sculpture of Garballous's face. It toppled to the ground, smashing to a million pieces.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who is the main character introduced in these extracts? What details can you gather about her appearance and personality from the descriptions provided and her interactions with others?
2. In the second extract, what does the dialogue reveal about the relationship between Domino and the person she is speaking to? How do their words and actions reflect their feelings towards each other?
3. Why does Domino want to leave? What obstacles does she face in doing so?
4. According to Garballous, how does magic affect Domino? Why does he think it makes it impossible for Domino to leave the Scientarium? Do you believe this claim to be true or is it a means of trapping her?
5. Why do you think some characters in the story want to have power over others? Do you think this is fair?
6. How would you feel if you were in Domino's shoes? What would you do if you were her?
7. Reflecting on Domino's situation in the Scientarium Celestis and the events described in these extracts, do you think she has any allies or friends among the other inhabitants? Or, is she alone? Why do you think so?
8. What type of emotions do you think Domino experiences throughout these extracts? How do these shape her decisions and actions? Provide evidence from the text to show and support your thinking.
9. What significance do you think the changing colours of the moon might have in the rest of the story?
10. What do you think might happen next? Can you make any predictions based on what you've read so far?



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ACTIVITY 1: DISCOVERING DOMINO

- Start by discussing the concept of character analysis. Explain that it involves examining the actions, relationships and motivations of a character to gain a deeper understanding of who they are.
- Read the two extracts aloud to the class, immersing them in the story and setting the stage for exploration of the main character.
- Introduce the main character of Domino from the provided extracts. Give a brief summary of the events of the two extracts and highlight key details about Domino's appearance, behaviour and circumstances.
- Ask students to share their initial impressions of Domino based on the summary and readings. Prompt them to discuss what they found interesting or notable about her character and the situations she faces.
- Break down the components of character analysis into 'traits', 'motivations', 'relationships' and 'hopes and dreams'.
 - **Traits:** These are the distinctive qualities or characteristics that make each character unique, such as their personality traits, physical appearance or habits.
 - **Motivations:** These are the reasons or driving forces behind a character's actions and decisions. Understanding a character's motivations helps us understand why they behave the way they do.
 - **Relationships:** This refers to the connections or interactions that characters have with other characters in the story. It includes friendships, family relationships, rivalries and any other connections that affect the characters' experiences and actions.
 - **Hopes and Dreams:** These are the desires, aspirations, and goals that characters have for themselves or for their future. Hopes and dreams can shape a character's actions and motivations, driving them to pursue certain paths or make particular decisions.
- Discuss each element separately, providing examples from the text to illustrate how they contribute to understanding Domino's character.
- Distribute the activity sheet or guide students in creating their own charts for analysing Domino's traits, motivations, relationships and hopes and dreams. Ask them to fill in each section with evidence from the text, to develop their critical thinking and close reading skills.
- Allow students time to work individually or in pairs to complete their analysis sheets. Circulate the classroom to provide support and guidance as needed, clarifying any questions they may have about Domino's character or the analysis process.
- Bring them back together and facilitate a discussion to share findings and insights from the activity.
- Conclude the lesson by summarising key insights from the character analysis. Prompt students to reflect on how their understanding of character analysis deepened and how it enhanced their perception of Domino as a character.
- Encourage students to regularly update their character analysis activity sheets as they read further. This ongoing analysis will deepen their understanding of Domino and other characters, enabling them to track her development, including her various personas and identity crises throughout the story.

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ACTIVITY SHEET 1: GETTING TO KNOW DOMINO

Traits

List the distinctive qualities or characteristics that describe Domino. Provide evidence from the text to support each trait.

Draw an illustration

Motivations

Identify the reasons or driving forces behind Domino's actions and decisions. Explain how these motivations influence her behaviour.

Relationships

Describe the connections or interactions that Domino has with other characters in the story. Explore how these relationships affect Domino's experiences.

Hopes and Dreams

Discuss the desires, aspirations or goals that Domino has for herself or her future and how these shape her actions and motivations.



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EXTRACT 2: LIZARD LIBERATION

(from CHAPTER 8: THE THUNDER LIZARD: pages 62–64)

The thunder lizard gave a low, disapproving groan and trundled forward, nudging its head into her stomach and easing her away from the wall.

‘All right, I’ll stop,’ said Domino. ‘But you have to stop too.’

It sniffed at her grazed arm, then licked it with a large purple tongue, leaving behind a glistening layer of warm mucus.

Calvin gaped at her. ‘You insane, brilliant idiot. You tried to reason with a thunder lizard, and it worked!’

Domino grinned as she caught her breath. The lizard returned to its pile of straw, watching her curiously, then gave a grateful, cow-like moo, followed by a violent sneeze. Domino puffed out her chest, pleased with her achievement. Calvin peeled snot from his face.

‘Maybe you could teach it some manners next,’ he said, rubbing his hands on the wall.

‘It’s not an it, it’s a she. You can tell by these.’ She pointed to the backplates. ‘They’re pointier and darker than the male’s.’

‘How do you know that? You don’t know anything.’

‘I know about thunder lizards – they’re the only lessons I like. This is a greater plated lizard. I think I’ll call her Oshi.’

‘That’s a terrible name.’

‘It’s the noise she made when she sneezed! What would you call her?’

‘Horrible Cow-Lizard,’ said Calvin, grabbing the keys from Domino. ‘Wait . . . look.’

He raised his lighter towards the opposite side of the room. A pair of metal doors stretched to the ceiling. ‘That must be how they got Oshi in here,’ said Domino. ‘Hmm, I wonder which key would open them.’

Calvin looked at her, then back at the doors. His eyes bulged. ‘Wait, no – you’re not letting it out of here.’ ‘Why not?’

‘Because there’s a bunch of old Barons out there whose secrets are worth money to Baron Magnus – money I plan to make. They might stop talking if they hear a big lizard stomping about. Are you listening to me?’

Domino was patting Oshi’s head. The thunder lizard rumbled in approval, then nuzzled Domino’s face, making her giggle. ‘She shouldn’t be trapped. She should be free.’

Calvin sighed, seeing the stubborn look Domino was giving him. ‘We can come back for it later. Don’t you want to know about Tronnimuss’s Great Plan thingy? What if it is to do with your blood?’

Domino grumbled, then followed Calvin towards the smaller door. ‘We’ll come back, I promise!’ she said, and Oshi let out a mournful croon. ‘It’s not fair. She doesn’t like being shut up in here.’

‘I heard animals love captivity,’ said Calvin, kneeling by the lock. ‘Why wouldn’t they? Having people feed you all day, never worrying about anything. Sounds great.’ ‘How about I lock you in a cage, see how you like it?’



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What exactly is a thunder lizard? Can you describe it using the details from this extract or the illustrations in the story? Why do you think it's called a 'thunder lizard'?
2. What is the colour of the thunder lizard's tongue?
3. How does Domino figure out the gender of the thunder lizard? What does this show about her character?
4. Why did Domino decide to name the thunder lizard Oshi? Do you think this name suits the thunder lizard?
5. What are Domino's thoughts on keeping animals in captivity? What's your opinion on this topic?
6. Why is Calvin initially hesitant to release the thunder lizard from its enclosure? Do you empathise with him?
7. Have you ever been to a zoo, aquarium or sanctuary? How did you feel when you saw animals in cages?
8. Can you think of any reasons why animals might be kept in captivity? Are there any benefits?
9. Calvin says 'animals love captivity'? What reasons might he have for believing that? Would you agree? How do you think animals in captivity feel compared to those in the wild? Are they happier or unhappier? Why?
10. Do you see any similarities between Domino and Oshi's situations, where they both feel stuck?



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ACTIVITY 2: ANIMALS IN CAPTIVITY

- Ask students to share their experiences of visiting places such as zoos, aquariums or wildlife sanctuaries and what they saw during their visits. Record their range of responses on the board.
- Introduce the concept of animals in captivity, explaining that captivity refers to animals being confined in controlled environments such as those locations mentioned earlier or research facilities.
- Optionally, you may choose to offer more context by sharing images or videos showing animals in captivity. Examples could feature them in enclosures, tanks and cages. This can help stimulate conversation and encourage students to share their initial thoughts and reactions on the topic.
- Following this, share the extract with the class and guide them through a structured reading, focusing on key details about the thunder lizard's captivity and the characters' attitudes towards it.
- Invite students to annotate the text as they read, noting evidence of the thunder lizard's emotions and Domino and Calvin's differing perspectives on captivity.
- Lead a class discussion using the provided questions, e.g. What are Domino and Calvin's opinions about keeping animals in captivity? How does Domino's empathy towards the thunder lizard influence her actions? Do you agree with Calvin's statement that animals love captivity? Why or why not?
- Also, highlight the parallel between Domino and Oshi, who are both experiencing the shared struggle of feeling trapped in situations they desperately want to escape from. Reflect whether this shared experience helps Domino develop empathy, despite not being a particularly empathetic person.
- Tell the students that they're going to take on the role of Domino and Oshi to write two diary entries to show each of their thoughts and feelings about being trapped in captivity and their desires for freedom.
- Recap the structural and language features of diary writing, including: first-person perspective, chronological order, personal reflection, use of sensory language and descriptive detail.
- Offer students access to the text to refer back to as they work on their diary entries. You can also provide sentence starters, vocabulary lists or examples of diary entries written from different perspectives to inspire their writing.
- Allow students sufficient time to work on their diary entries. Depending on the length and complexity of the entries, you may choose to allocate one or more lessons for this activity.
- Remind them to empathise with both characters as they write their diary entries. Encourage them to consider the unique perspectives and experiences of both a human and a dinosaur in captivity.
- Once they have completed their diary entries, provide an opportunity for them to share their work with peers. This can be done through small group discussions, pair sharing or a whole-class presentation format.
- To end, you could also further students' knowledge and discuss the concept of rewilding, which involves reintroducing captive animals into their natural habitats to restore ecosystems and promote biodiversity.



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ACTIVITY SHEET 2: DIARY ENTRIES FROM DOMINO AND OSHI

Instructions: Imagine you are Domino and Oshi. Put yourself in their shoes (or claws!) and write two diary entries, one from each perspective. Express their thoughts and emotions about being trapped in captivity and their longing for freedom.

Diary Entry 1: Domino's Perspective

Imagine you are Domino, a brave and adventurous girl who has found herself confined within the walls of the Scientarium Celestis, under the strict rule of the Science Barons, and say that stepping outside will bring harm to her, citing the threat of magic. Write a diary entry expressing Domino's feelings about being stuck in captivity and her desires to escape.

Diary Entry 2: Oshi's Perspective

Now, put yourself in the claws of Oshi, the thunder lizard. What might she be thinking and feeling about being confined in captivity? Write a diary entry from Oshi's perspective, expressing her longing for freedom and her experiences in captivity as a dinosaur. Consider the unique challenges and emotions she might face in this situation.

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EXTRACT 3A: THE SECRET TO LYING

(from CHAPTER 18 – THE HOUSE THAT NEVER STAYED STILL: page 164)

‘You still look like Domino, you know,’ Calvin whispered, as Kollob rattled off a list of guests who’d turn violent if ignored.

‘What?’ Domino gasped, grabbing a spoon to check her reflection. (‘I was using that!’ complained a tiny wizard.) ‘I do not!’ she said, seeing the rosy-cheeked girl staring back. ‘You slouch like her, drag your feet like her, stare into space like her.’ Calvin sniffed. ‘And you could use a bath too.’

‘Children,’ said Kollob, ears wagging, ‘I have asked for your attention – don’t make me ask again.’

‘You need to blend into the background,’ Calvin continued. ‘Turn invisible. When I was a servant, nobody even looked at me.’

‘I wonder why. Anyway, where’s the fun in that?’ Calvin looked about shiftily. ‘Listen.’ He dropped his voice. ‘Do you want to know the secret to lying?’

‘As if you know the secret to lying.’

‘The trick is to be able to lie even to yourself. You have to believe that you really are Bella. I learned that from these old detective books my mum used to read me, called –’

EXTRACT 3B: MAGIC: THE ART OF DECEPTION?

(from CHAPTER 20 – THE SCENE OF THE CRIME: pages 196-197)

‘Your spell’s gone,’ she grumbled, poking her upturned nose. ‘How do I change my face back?’

‘You must have a clear idea of who you want to look like.’

He produced a painting of a girl with red curls and freckled cheeks.

‘That’s Bella. She’s real?’

‘She visited the Diner centuries ago. Now, we call this kind of spell a glamour, or illusion – your face isn’t actually changing, just the way it appears. You have to bend the light about you, by imagining you look a different way. Picture how Bella walks, blinks, smiles, then slowly, slowly let yourself believe that you are her.’

‘Huh, that reminds me of something Calvin said about lying – how you have to force yourself to believe your own lie. Magic is sort of like lying, isn’t it?’

‘Yes, I suppose it is. You’re trying to lie to reality itself.’



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who is talking to Domino in the beginning of the first extract?
2. What does Calvin tell Domino about her appearance?
3. How does Kollob react to the conversation between Calvin and Domino?
4. What is Calvin's advice to Domino about blending into the background? Why does he suggest this?
5. Have you ever wished you could blend into the background? When did you feel that way? Do you usually prefer to blend in or stand out from the crowd? Why?
6. According to Calvin, what is the secret to lying and where did he learn it from?
7. What do you think Calvin means when he says the secret to lying is to 'be able to lie to yourself'? Have you ever attempted to lie to yourself to convince others? If so, can you provide an example?
8. Is honesty always the best policy? Can you think of any situations where it might be okay to lie to yourself?
9. Reflect on the statement, "Magic is sort of like lying." Do you agree or disagree with this perspective?
10. Do you believe in magic or do you think it's all just make-believe or deception?



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ACTIVITY 3: LYING TO YOURSELF

- Begin by discussing the concept of lying with students. Ask them to share their understanding of what it means to lie and why people might choose to lie.
- Next, collaboratively, as a class, engage in a brief brainstorming session to explore and categorise different types of lies (both explicit and implicit) that students have encountered. These could include:
 - **White Lies:** These are lies told with good intentions to spare someone's feelings or avoid causing harm. For example, telling someone their new haircut looks nice even if you don't really like it.
 - **Lies of Omission:** These are lies where important information is left out or withheld to manipulate a situation or deceive someone. For instance, not telling a friend that you accidentally broke their favourite mug.
 - **Exaggerations:** These are lies where the truth is stretched or exaggerated to make a story more interesting or impressive. For example, claiming to have caught a fish "this big" when it was actually smaller.
 - **Excuses:** These are lies used to avoid taking responsibility for one's actions or to justify behaviour. For example, blaming a missing or incomplete piece of homework on their family pet.
- Transition to highlighting the recurring theme of lies in the story, emphasising that deceit is prevalent, with multiple characters entangled in dishonesty. Share examples of how Domino, Calvin, Garballous, the Science Barons and Raphael all engage in deception. Contrast this with the fact that Abzalaymon, the Spirit of Truth and Lies, ironically tells Domino the truth most of the time...
- Ask students to reflect individually on the following questions: Have you ever lied to someone? Why did you choose to lie? How did you feel before, during and after telling the lie? What do you think are the potential consequences of lying, both for the person telling the lie and for others involved? Encourage students to be honest in their reflections and to consider both positive and negative aspects of lying.
- Refer back to the extract where Calvin discloses the secret of lying with the quote, 'The trick is to be able to lie even to yourself' (page 164). Emphasise to students that this appears throughout the book, such as on pages 178 and 261.
- Tell the students that they will now put Calvin's theory into practice by participating in a game focused on the theme of lying, known as 'Two Truths and a Lie'.
- Divide the class into small groups of three or four. Ask each student to write three statements about themselves on the activity sheet. Remind them that two should be true and one should be a lie.
- Following this, students will share their three statements with their group. The others will listen and vote on which they believe is the lie. After tallying the votes, the student will reveal the lie and explain their choice. The game continues with each student taking a turn to share their two truths and a lie.
- Encourage students to be creative with their statements and to make them believable to challenge their classmates.



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ACTIVITY SHEET 3: TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

- Instructions:**
1. Write down three statements about yourself.
 2. Two of these statements must be true, while one should be a lie.
 3. Try to make your statements as convincing as possible to mislead your classmates.

Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3

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EXTRACT 4A: A DOLLOP OF MOLTEN LAVA

(from CHAPTER 1 – A CRIME AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD: page 164)

Domino turned in confusion. Claudette's face was buried in her hands, but the others were gaping at the sky. The trails of firework smoke had been washed away by the wind. The moon was red again, but there was something glowing orange, getting larger with each second. It flared so bright that Domino had to cover her eyes.

'Get downstairs!' the others yelled, bundling up a weeping Claudette and rushing for the trapdoor. But Domino kept staring, wondering what the light in the sky could be. It only occurred to her too late that she should have been running for shelter as well.

There was a deafening crack then a spray of sandstone that became a dark biting cloud that smothered the roof. For a moment Domino couldn't see, coughing up mouthfuls of dust. Then the cloud cleared, and she took a wary step forward, gazing in wonder and fear.

It had carved a crater in the rooftop, and it sat at the centre, glowing red. Like a dollop of molten lava.

A piece of the moon.

EXTRACT 4B: MOON NOT FALLING

(from CHAPTER 29 – THE ACTOR: page 311)

The streets of Abzalaymon were quiet, flickering from yellow to silver in the changing light of the moon. The warm air hummed with mosquitoes, and on one corner a monkey was rifling through a stack of newspapers.

MOON NOT FALLING,
SAY SCIENCE BARONS

'But it is falling,' said Domino, throwing the monkey the bread crust she'd been chewing. She looked up at the huge silver orb. Thankfully, it didn't seem to have moved any closer since the night she'd fled the Wizard Council.

'Yeah, but the Barons don't want people to know that – think how panicked everyone would be!'



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think was going through Domino's mind as she stared at the glowing orange light?
2. Can you act out how Domino might have appeared while taking 'a wary step forward, gazing with a mix of wonder and fear', as she approached the fallen piece of the moon?
3. If you could ask Domino one question about her experience on the rooftop, what would it be and why?
4. Why did the author choose to describe the piece of the moon as 'a dollop of molten lava'? Do you think this simile effectively captures the appearance of the object and enhances the scene for the reader?
5. Imagine if the Moon really did start falling from the sky. How do you think you would react?
6. Why do you think the science barons didn't want the people of Abzalaymon to know about the falling moon? How might their position of power play a role in this decision? Could it be connected?
7. Do you think it's ever right to hide the truth from people to prevent panic? Why or why not?
8. Does the fact that the headline was wrong teach us anything about being careful with what we read?
9. Can misinformation affect our understanding of the world and influence our actions and decisions?
10. What can we do to stop the spread of misinformation? How can we verify it before believing or sharing it?

THE SECRET OF THE MOONSHARD



STRUAN MURRAY

ILLUSTRATED BY VIVIENNE TO

ACTIVITY 4: THE SCIENCE OF THE MOON

- Start by engaging students in a discussion about their prior knowledge of the Moon. Record their responses on the board to create a starting point for the lesson.
- Introduce the lesson by explaining that today, we will explore the science of the Moon in more detail.
- Share the extracts with the class, paying special attention to the events described in each, such as the red colour of the Moon and the notion of it falling from the sky. Encourage students to actively listen and take note of key details as we read through the texts together.
- Next, provide further context about the Moon by explaining the basic science behind it. You could:
 - discuss how the Moon orbits around the Earth, revolving once approximately every 27.3 days.
 - emphasise that the Moon is not a light source itself, but rather reflects sunlight to appear bright in the night sky.
 - explain the concept of lunar phases, such as the New Moon, First Quarter, Full Moon and Last Quarter and how they occur due to the changing positions of the Moon, Earth and Sun.
 - illustrate how the Moon is a major influence on the Earth's tides, using diagrams or visual aids.
 - talk about the cultural significance of the Moon in various societies throughout history, including its roles in mythology, calendars and navigation.
- As the moon in the story turns red, provide students with real-life examples and images of past blood moons to introduce the concept of a 'blood moon' and its awe-inspiring sight. Explain why this phenomenon happens by discussing lunar eclipses and how the Earth's atmosphere scatters sunlight, allowing red wavelengths to reach the Moon and cast a reddish-orange glow upon it during totality (when the Earth comes between the Sun and the Moon and its shadow covers the Moon).
- Then, address the idea of the Moon falling from the sky and crashing into Earth, as it does in the story. While this scenario may ignite imaginations, reassure students that it's not scientifically possible due to the gravitational pull between the Earth and the Moon that keeps it in orbit.
- Hand out the activity sheets to each student. On the activity sheet, students will find a range of statements, including both common myths and scientifically accurate facts about the Moon.
- Encourage them to work individually or in pairs to determine whether each statement is a myth or a fact. Explain how to critically evaluate each statement based on the knowledge they've gained during the lesson, considering factors such as scientific principles, evidence and logical reasoning.
- After students have completed the activity, review their answers together and use this opportunity to clarify any misconceptions and reinforce key concepts learned during the lesson.
- As an extra activity, encourage students to keep a moon journal where they observe and record the phases of the Moon over a month. They can note the dates, sketch the appearance of the Moon each night and write down any observations they make about changes in its shape and position.

Answers: Here are the answers to the statements on the activity sheet with their corresponding numbers: 1. Fact; 2. Myth; 3. Fact; 4. Myth; 5. Fact; 6. Myth; 7. Fact; 8. Myth; 9. Fact; 10. Fact



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ACTIVITY SHEET 4: MOON MYTH OR FACT?

Statement	Myth or Fact?
1. The Moon can turn red during a lunar eclipse.	
2. The Moon can fall from the sky like a rock.	
3. The Moon's colour can change due to atmospheric conditions.	
4. The Moon is made of cheese.	
5. The Moon orbits around the Earth.	
6. The Moon has its own light source.	
7. The Moon controls the tides on Earth.	
8. The Moon can disappear completely during a blood moon.	
9. The Moon is closer to the Earth than the Sun.	
10. The Moon is essential for life on Earth.	

THE SECRET OF THE MOONSHARD



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NATIONAL CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES - KEY STAGE 2/3

English

Spoken Language

Pupils should be taught to:

- Ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge
- Articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- Develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas
- Participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play/improvisations and debates

Reading – comprehension

Pupils should be taught to:

- Maintain positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read by:
 - continuing to read and discuss an increasingly wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books or textbooks
 - increasing their familiarity with a wide range of books, including myths, legends and traditional stories, modern fiction, fiction from our literary heritage, and books from other cultures and traditions
 - recommending books that they have read to their peers, giving reasons for their choices
 - identifying and discussing themes and conventions in and across a wide range of writing
- Understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by:
 - drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence
 - predicting what might happen from details stated and implied
 - summarising the main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph, identifying key details that support the main ideas

Writing: composition

Pupils should be taught to:

- Plan their writing by:
 - discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar
- Develop positive attitudes towards and stamina for writing by:
 - writing narratives about personal experiences and those of others (real and fictional)



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Science

Earth and Space

Pupils should be taught to:

- describe the movement of the Moon relative to the Earth
- describe the Sun, Earth and Moon as approximately spherical bodies

PSHE (taken from Programme of Study for PSHE education: KS1–5)

Pupils learn

Shared responsibilities

- L4. the importance of having compassion towards others; shared responsibilities we all have for caring for other people and living things; how to show care and concern for others

Friendships

- R11. what constitutes a positive healthy friendship (e.g. mutual respect, trust, truthfulness, loyalty, kindness, generosity, sharing interests and experiences, support with problems and difficulties); that the same principles apply to online friendships as to face-to-face relationships



THE SECRET OF THE MOONSHARD



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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND INNOVATIVE IDEAS

- **Create a Comic Strip:** Working individually or in groups, have students create comic strips retelling a chapter or key event from the book. This activity combines storytelling with visual artistry and allows students to explore different narrative techniques.
- **Interactive Map of Abzalaymon:** Using online tools, have students collaboratively create an interactive map of Abzalaymon, using the illustrated map found at the front of the book, marking key locations and landmarks mentioned in the book.
- **Science vs. Magic Debate:** Divide the class into two groups, one representing science and the other representing magic. Have them prepare arguments and debate which force is more powerful and beneficial to society. Encourage critical thinking and creative reasoning.
- **Dinosaur Discussion:** In the book, thunder lizards are described as being brought back from extinction. Find out more about this prehistoric time of dinosaurs and investigate the theories behind their extinction. Contemplate the potential consequences of bringing dinosaurs back to life, envisioning how such a scenario might alter our current world.
- **Understanding Inequality Then and Now:** Discover the differences between the rich and poor characters in the book, focusing on how factory owners exert power over their workers. Discuss how this mirrors historical periods like the Industrial Revolution, when working conditions were harsh. Think about how inequality still exists today and show empathy by reflecting on the obstacles faced by marginalised groups in society.
- **Character Interviews:** Assign students different characters from the book and have them conduct interviews with each other in character, exploring their perspectives on the events unfolding in the story.
- **Escape Room Challenge:** Design an escape room based on Domino's journey, where students must solve puzzles and uncover clues to escape from the floating laboratory and reach Abzalaymon. Incorporate elements of science and magic into the challenges to reflect the themes of the book.
- **Design a Diner:** Explore the Diner's importance in the book as it becomes a character of its very own. Take a virtual journey to a classic American fifties-style diner for inspiration and create your own diner, thinking about its design, decor and special features. Immerse yourself in the world of the book as you envision the atmosphere and ambiance of your diner, reflecting on its significance to the story.
- **Thunder Lizards:** Provide students with information about thunder lizards from the story, such as their appearance, abilities and behaviours, as well as any specific details mentioned about different species. Students can then use drawing materials, clay or digital design software to create their unique thunder lizard. Encourage them to consider aspects like size, shape, colour and distinctive features when crafting their creatures.
- **Newspaper Front Pages:** Imagine yourself as a journalist and create your own newspaper front pages inspired by headlines from the book, like 'DANGEROUS CRIMINAL, STILL AT LARGE' and 'MOON NOT FALLING, SAY SCIENCE BARONS.' Write a range of captivating stories to accompany these headlines and enhance your designs with illustrations and additional content.