

PART 1

Chapter 1: Our Place

About This Guide

This teacher guide supports classroom use of Chapter 1 of *The Adventures of Squidape*. It has been designed for students in Years 3–4 (approximately 8–9 years of age). The opening chapter introduces Roland, a neurodivergent boy who lives in Cheltenham, and invites students into his thoughtful, detail-oriented view of the world.

The activities in this guide develop reading comprehension, vocabulary, written expression, and oral communication, while building empathy and understanding of diverse ways of thinking. All content links to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use the following prompts to prepare students for the chapter. These can be conducted as a whole-class discussion or a think-pair-share activity.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever needed a routine to help you get started in the morning? What does your routine look like?
- What does the word 'neighbourhood' mean to you? What do you notice about the street where you live?
- Have you ever played a spot-the-difference puzzle? What kinds of things were different?
- What do you think it might feel like if your routine was suddenly changed?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapter 1. Before reading, discuss meanings as a class. After reading, students can complete the activities below.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
semi-detached	A pair of houses that share one wall but are each a separate home.
mock Tudor	A building style that copies the look of Tudor-era homes, with white walls and dark timber beams.

accountant	A person whose job is to look after financial records and accounts.
downsized	When a company reduces the number of workers it employs.
outsourced	When a business sends work to be done by another company, often to save money.
antiques	Old objects that have value because of their age, rarity or craftsmanship.
preschool	An early childhood setting for children before they begin primary school.
identical	Exactly the same in every way.
organise	To arrange things in an ordered, planned way.
occasionally	Sometimes, but not very often.
crêpe paper	A thin, crinkled paper often used for craft activities.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 – Word Sort

Sort the vocabulary words into the table below according to the number of syllables.

Syllables	Words from the list
2 syllables	
3 syllables	
4 syllables	
5+ syllables	

Activity 2 – Spelling in Context

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write each word in a sentence that shows you understand its meaning. Underline the vocabulary word in each sentence.

Activity 3 – Word Meanings

Match each word to its definition. Use the table above to help you, then try again without looking.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences. Use evidence from the text to support your answers.

Literal Comprehension (Finding Information)

1. What is the name of the narrator and where does he live?
2. What does 'mock Tudor' mean, and how does Roland describe his street?
3. What job did Roland's dad have before he bought an antiques shop?
4. What does Roland's mum do for work?
5. Name the four children in the Plate family.
6. What are the steps in Roland's morning routine? List them in order.

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

7. Roland imagines his dad counting kidney beans and string beans at his desk. What does this tell us about Roland's imagination and sense of humour?
8. Roland says his mum 'says a lot with her eyes.' What do you think he means by this?
9. Why do you think Roland finds it helpful to look at his morning list every day, even though he knows it from memory?
10. Roland says, 'I'm pretty certain that a person can't actually be a rabbit,' when explaining Bunny's name. What does this kind of thinking tell us about Roland's personality?
11. Why might Roland's mum and his friends' mum talk in 'very quiet voices' when the children are around?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

12. Roland describes his street as 'a huge spot-the-difference puzzle.' Do you think this is a good comparison? Why or why not?
13. Roland's mum made him a morning routine list when he was little. How does having a routine help people? Can you think of any routines in your own life?
14. Roland mentions he is pretty sure Chelsea is making up the story about a pet zebra. How can readers tell when story characters are exaggerating or making things up?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

These questions ask you to think carefully and share your own ideas. There are no single right or wrong answers. Write 3–5 sentences for each response.

15. Roland notices tiny details that most people would miss, like a loose screw on a house number. What kinds of things do you notice in your environment that others might overlook? Why do you think you notice those things?
16. Roland finds comfort in playing his 'spot-the-difference' game in his head when he cannot sleep. What strategies do you use when you cannot sleep or when you feel worried?
17. Roland's dad was 'downsized and outsourced' but this led to him following a dream and buying an antiques shop. Can you think of a time when something disappointing actually led to something better?
18. Roland helps his mum sort Lego and cut crêpe paper for her work. Why do you think it is important to help family members? What kinds of things do you do to help at home?
19. Roland's family and their neighbours are clearly very close. What makes a good neighbourhood? What does your ideal neighbourhood look like?

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group talk, or a Socratic seminar. Encourage students to listen to each other, build on ideas, and use evidence from the text.

Understanding Neurodiversity

- Roland describes how his brain 'freezes' his body and he starts breathing fast if he doesn't know what to do next. Why is it important that we understand that people's brains work in different ways?
- Roland's mum worked out what Roland needed and made him a list. What does this tell us about what good support looks like?
- How might Roland's school experience be different from someone who doesn't need a routine? What could teachers and classmates do to help?

Empathy and Perspective

- Roland tells this story in first person (using 'I'). How does this help us understand his feelings and point of view?
- Think about a time you felt anxious or uncomfortable when things changed unexpectedly. How did that feel? How did it help to have a plan?

- Arrow Plate has an unusual name. How do you think he might feel when people react to his name? How should we respond when names are different to what we expect?

Community and Belonging

- Roland's street sounds like a warm and connected community. What makes a community feel safe and welcoming?
- Both Roland's family and the Plate family are described as being very different (in name, in door colour, in size). How can people who are different from each other still be great friends?
- Why do you think the author chose to begin the novel by describing Roland's home and street rather than jumping straight into an exciting event?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question. These can be used as a quick check after reading.

Section A – Multiple Choice

1. What type of house does Roland live in?

- A A terrace house
- B A semi-detached house
- C A fully detached house
- D A flat

Answer: B

2. What did Roland's dad do before he bought an antiques shop?

- A He was a teacher
- B He was a baker
- C He was an accountant
- D He was a dentist

Answer: C

3. What is Bunny Plate's job?

- A A doctor
- B A teacher

C A dentist

D A vet

Answer: C

4. Which item comes FIRST in Roland's morning list?

- A Clean teeth
- B Shower upstairs
- C Wake up
- D Get dressed

Answer: C

5. What animal does Chelsea claim they have as a pet?

- A A flamingo
- B A giraffe
- C A zebra
- D A tiger

Answer: C

Section B – True or False

Statement	True or False?
Roland lives at number 97 Foglost Street.	True
Roland's neighbours all have the same coloured front doors.	False
Mr Plate and Roland's dad still work together.	False
Roland's mum is a preschool teacher.	True
Leah and Layla are Roland's twin friends from across the street.	True
Chelsea is older than Leah and Layla.	False
Roland always follows his morning list in exactly the same order.	True
Arrow Plate has a very common name that nobody finds unusual.	False

Section C – Short Answer Recall

1. What does 'mock Tudor' mean?

2. How did Roland's dad react to being made redundant?

3. Why does Roland's mum make Roland a morning list?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps chapter activities to Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3–4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 – Understand how language features, images and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Vocabulary activities; discussion of author's language choices (e.g. 'spot-the-difference', 'bean-counter').
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 – Understand how sentences can be combined to create meaning and effect.	Comprehension questions requiring full-sentence answers; short-answer writing tasks.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 – Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and can be used to engage the reader.	Key vocabulary activities; exploring descriptive language and figurative expressions.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 – Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Literal, inferential and evaluative comprehension questions.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 – Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare and synthesise information.	Open-ended short answer questions; before-reading discussion prompts.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 – Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Whole-class and small-group discussion questions.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 – Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Short answer and open-ended writing tasks.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 – Discuss how language and images in texts represent ideas and character perspectives.	Discussion questions on Roland's perspective and first-person narration.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 – Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning and engage the reader.	Analysis of author's choice to open with setting; figurative language.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 – Make connections between personal experiences and the situations and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on routine, community, helping family.

Teacher Notes and Inclusive Learning Suggestions

Neurodiversity and Sensitivity Note

Roland exhibits characteristics consistent with neurodivergent thinking, including a strong need for routine, literal interpretation of language, and detailed observational thinking. These are presented with warmth and humour throughout the novel. Teachers are encouraged to use Roland's character as a springboard for classroom conversations about the value of different ways of thinking and learning, framed positively and inclusively.

Be mindful that some students in your class may identify with Roland's experiences. Create a safe space for discussion by modelling respectful language and focusing on Roland's strengths and capabilities.

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Ask students to write a journal entry from Roland's perspective about a day when his routine was disrupted. Encourage use of first-person voice, sensory detail, and the vocabulary words from this guide.
Support	Provide sentence starters for comprehension and short-answer responses. Pair students with a reading buddy. Allow verbal responses where appropriate.
EAL/D	Pre-teach key vocabulary using visual cues. Allow additional time. Provide translated vocabulary support if available.
Early Finishers	Research 'mock Tudor architecture' and create an illustrated comparison of a real Tudor home versus a mock Tudor home. Present findings to the class.

Extension Creative Activity

Ask students to draw their own street as a 'spot-the-difference' puzzle, identifying at least five differences between houses. Students then write a short paragraph describing their street in the style of Roland's narration — noticing details, using comparisons and a touch of humour.

PART 2

Chapter 2: SAD and LIAR

About This Chapter

Chapter 2 introduces Roland's father's antiques shop and the colourful world of antique dealing. Through the invented organisations SAD (Society of Antique Dealers) and LIAR (Licensed Institute of Antique Retailers), the author creates a playful exploration of snobbery, ambition, and belonging. Students also meet the chapter's key antagonist: Mr Smedley Smooth, a larger-than-life show-off with a secret longing.

This chapter is rich in wordplay, humour, and character-building. It rewards close reading and offers excellent opportunities to explore inference, satire, and the way authors construct memorable characters.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to prepare students for the themes and ideas in Chapter 2.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever visited a second-hand shop, garage sale, or market? What was it like? Did you find anything interesting?
- Do you know what an acronym is? Can you think of any acronyms you already know? (e.g. ANZAC, NASA, AFL)
- Have you ever really wanted to join a group or club but felt left out? How did that feel?
- What does the word 'snobbish' mean? Can you give an example of snobbish behaviour?
- Have you ever heard someone do a funny voice to imitate another person? Why do people do impressions when telling stories?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapter 2. Explore meanings before or during reading, using context clues from the text.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
antiques	Old objects that are valued for their age, rarity, or craftsmanship.
collectibles	Items that people enjoy collecting because they are interesting, unusual, or valuable.
flawlessly	Without any faults or imperfections; perfectly.
encyclopaedic	Having very wide and detailed knowledge, like an encyclopaedia.
genuine	Real and authentic, not a copy or a fake.
snobbish	Acting as though you are better than others, especially about taste or social status.
bric-a-brac	Small, old, or unusual objects collected for decoration or interest.
objets d'art	A French phrase meaning small objects considered to be artistic or decorative.
ambience	The mood or feeling created by a place or environment.
identity	A person who is well known in a particular area or community.
seething	Feeling intense, barely controlled anger or frustration.
determined	Having made a firm decision to do something and not giving up.
reselling	Buying something and then selling it again, usually at a higher price.
splendid	Impressively good; excellent or wonderful.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - Borrowed Words

Two words in the vocabulary list come from French: bric-a-brac and objets d'art. Use a dictionary or ask your teacher to find two more English words borrowed from French. Write them below and explain their meanings.

Word 1: _____

Meaning: _____

Word 2: _____

Meaning: _____

Activity 2 - Word Sort: Adjectives and Nouns

Sort the vocabulary words into two groups: words that describe things (adjectives or adverbs) and words that name things (nouns). Some words could fit in both groups. Record your answers in the table below.

Describing Words (Adjectives / Adverbs)	Naming Words (Nouns)

Activity 2 - Borrowed Words

Two words in the vocabulary list come from French: bric-a-brac and objets d'art. Use a dictionary or ask your teacher to find two more English words borrowed from French. Write them below and explain their meanings.

Word 1: _____

Meaning: _____

Word 2: _____

Meaning: _____

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word in each sentence.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Literal Comprehension (Finding Information)

1. What does SAD stand for, and what are SAD shops like?
2. What does LIAR stand for, and how is a LIAR shop different from a SAD shop?
3. What is the name of Roland's dad's antiques shop, and which organisation does he belong to?
4. Where does Mr Smedley Smooth live, and how does he behave in his village?
5. Who was Silky Smooth, and what happened to her shop after she died?
6. What did Smedley do to Silky's old shop in his attempt to impress the SAD Committee?
7. What was the name of Smedley's new antiques gallery, and what magazine featured it?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Roland says he feels sad for the owner of the SAD shop because there are never any customers. What does this tell us about what Roland values in people and places?
2. Roland notices that calling someone a 'LIAR' is rude, even if that is the official name. How does the author use this confusion to make a comment about snobbery?
3. Why do you think Dad named his shop 'The Trevor Trove' instead of 'Treasure Trove'? What does this choice suggest about Dad's personality?
4. Roland says, 'I'm not sure being poked in the eye is much of a bargain.' What does this tell us about the way Roland thinks about language?
5. The SAD Committee continued to reject Smedley even after he opened the gallery Slick. What do you think their real reasons might have been?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. Dad describes Smedley as 'mostly harmless,' but the chapter ends with a hint that Smedley might go very far to get what he wants. What do you predict Smedley will do next? Use clues from the text to support your prediction.
2. Roland clearly prefers LIAR shops over SAD shops. Do you agree with his reasoning? Would you rather visit a shop where you can touch things, or one where everything is perfectly displayed but untouchable? Explain your thinking.
3. The author uses wordplay and humour throughout this chapter. Choose one example and explain why it is funny or clever.

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response. There are no single right or wrong answers.

1. Roland's dad loves telling stories about the people he meets. Think about someone you know who is a great storyteller. What makes them good at telling stories?
2. Smedley has an 'encyclopaedic memory' for objects and details. What subject or topic do you know a lot about? How did you learn so much about it?
3. The SAD shop owners look down on the LIAR shop owners, even though both groups love antiques. Why do you think people sometimes treat others differently just because of the type of group they belong to? Is this fair?
4. Smedley donates to local causes and hosts charity events. Does doing generous things for a community make up for being boastful or greedy? Explain your thinking.
5. The chapter ends with a cliffhanger: '...even Dad didn't know how far Smedley would go to get what he wanted.' Write a short paragraph predicting what Smedley will do next. Use what you know about his character to make your prediction convincing.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar. Encourage students to listen, build on each other's ideas, and use evidence from the text.

Belonging and Exclusion

- Smedley desperately wants to join SAD, but they keep rejecting him. Is it ever fair for a group to exclude someone? What reasons might make exclusion justified?
- Roland's dad thinks the SAD Committee is snobbish and rude. Have you ever experienced or witnessed snobbery? How did it make you feel?
- Is there a difference between having high standards and being a snob? Where is the line between the two?

Character and Motivation

- Mr Smedley Smooth is described as a show-off. Is there anything admirable about him? Can a character be both likeable and flawed at the same time?
- Dad says Smedley 'brings life and lots of money into the village.' Does contributing to a community change how we should judge someone's behaviour?
- Smedley grew up working in his grandmother's shop. How do you think the way we are raised shapes the kind of person we become?

Author's Craft and Humour

- The author named the two groups SAD and LIAR. Why are these names funny, and what point might the author be making by choosing them?
- Roland's dad uses a 'silly posh voice' to imitate Smedley. How does the author use humour to show us what kind of person Smedley is, without simply telling us directly?
- Roland often notices when language doesn't quite make sense (e.g. 'I'm not sure being poked in the eye is much of a bargain'). How does this way of thinking make the story funny? Can you find another example from the chapter?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question. These can be used as a quick comprehension check after reading.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. What does SAD stand for?

- A Serious Antiques Department
- B Society of Antique Dealers
- C Selective Antiques Display
- D Standard Antiques Division

Answer: B

2. What does LIAR stand for?

- A Licensed Institute of Antique Retailers
- B Large Inventory of Antique Relics
- C Local Institute of Antique Resellers
- D Licensed Importers of Antique Rarities

Answer: A

3. What is the name of Roland's dad's antiques shop?

- A Treasure Trove
- B Smooth Antiques
- C The Trevor Trove
- D Silky's Shop

Answer: C

4. Where did Smedley store the contents of his grandmother's old shop?

- A In his garage
- B In an abandoned cinema
- C In a warehouse
- D In the basement of Slick

Answer: B

5. What is the name of Smedley's new antiques gallery?

- A Splendid
- B Smooth
- C Silky
- D Slick

Answer: D

6. Which magazine featured Smedley's new gallery?

- A Antique World
- B Outmoded
- C Style and Shine
- D The Dealer's Digest

Answer: B

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
SAD shops allow customers to touch the items on display.	False
Roland's dad's real name is Trevor.	False
Smedley's grandmother Silky was once the president of LIAR.	True
Smedley has an excellent memory for objects and their value.	True
The SAD Committee welcomed Smedley as a member after he opened Slick.	False
Smedley lives about two hours' drive from Cheltenham.	True
Dad describes the SAD Committee as fair and open-minded.	False
Smedley drives a sleek red sportscar.	True

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. What are two things Roland likes about LIAR-style antiques shops?

2. What is Smedley Smooth's secret longing?

3. How did Smedley try to impress the SAD Committee? Give two examples from the chapter.

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapter 2 activities to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Vocabulary table; identifying use of wordplay, acronyms, and humour; French borrowed words activity.
Language	AC9E3LA05 / AC9E4LA05 - Understand how words are formed and how meanings change in context.	Spelling Activity 1 (word sort); exploring how SAD and LIAR function as both acronyms and everyday words.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Discussion of Smedley's posh voice; analysis of figurative and comic language throughout the chapter.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension questions.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Comparing SAD and LIAR shops; open-ended prediction task; character analysis of Smedley.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Whole-class and small-group discussion questions; Socratic seminar.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended short answer questions; cliffhanger prediction paragraph.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Discussion on Roland's perspective on LIAR vs SAD; Roland's literal interpretation of idioms.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Analysis of the author's use of humour and wordplay; how character is built through dialogue and narration.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on belonging, storytelling, and expertise; discussion questions on snobbery and exclusion.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

Wordplay, Humour, and Roland's Literal Thinking

Chapter 2 is a rich opportunity to explore how authors use wordplay and humour to entertain readers while also commenting on the world around them. The double meanings of SAD and LIAR are central to the chapter's comic effect. Encourage students to notice how Roland's literal thinking creates additional layers of humour, for example taking the word 'bargain' literally when Dad uses it as a figure of speech. This characteristic links back to Roland's neurodivergent thinking style introduced in Chapter 1, and reinforces how his unique perspective shapes the narrative voice throughout the novel.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
HASS - Economics and Business	Introduce the concept of buying and selling second-hand goods, and the idea of value. Discuss: how is the price of an antique determined? What makes something valuable?
Visual Arts	Students design the interior of either a SAD-style or a LIAR-style antiques shop, considering layout, display, mood, and what kinds of customers would visit.
English - Media Literacy	Students write a fake magazine review of Smedley's gallery Slick for Outmoded magazine, practising persuasive language and a formal, impressed tone.
Drama	Students role-play a scene in which Smedley applies to join the SAD Committee and is interviewed. Focus on character motivation, status, and dialogue.

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Students research a real organisation that supports antique dealers or collectors in Australia. Compare it to SAD and LIAR and present findings as a short report or poster.
Support	Provide sentence starters for comprehension responses. Allow the vocabulary table to be used during reading. Permit verbal responses where appropriate. Pair students for discussion tasks.
EAL/D	Pre-teach the French terms using images. Discuss how English borrows words from other languages and what this tells us about history and culture. Allow additional processing time.
Early Finishers	Write a detailed character profile for Mr Smedley Smooth including his appearance, personality, home, and greatest ambition. Include an illustration of Smedley in front of his gallery Slick.

PART 3

Chapter 3: Collectors and Collecting

About This Chapter

Chapter 3 takes readers on a tour of The Trevor Trove and introduces a colourful cast of Dad's regular customers -- his 'collection of collectors.' Each collector has a distinct personality and a surprising speciality, from uranium glass to snowdomes. The chapter also reveals the origin of Roland's own passion: Squidape comics. This chapter is rich in descriptive language, characterisation, and humour, and offers excellent opportunities to explore how authors build memorable characters through specific, well-chosen details.

Importantly, the chapter also contains the embedded magazine article 'That Chair!', which introduces a key plot thread. Roland's sensory sensitivity is touched on again through the music box scene with Mrs Lester-Crabbe, reinforcing his neurodivergent perspective with sensitivity and warmth.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to connect students with the themes of collecting, characters, and curiosity before reading Chapter 3.

Discussion Prompts

- Do you collect anything? What is it, and how did you start collecting it?
- Why do you think people enjoy collecting things? What do you think it feels like to find a missing piece for your collection?
- Have you ever found something unexpected -- like a book or toy -- that you didn't know you'd love until you discovered it? What was it?
- What makes a shop interesting to visit? What would your ideal shop look like?
- Have you ever read a comic book or graphic novel? What did you enjoy about it?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapter 3. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
auction house	A business that sells items to the highest bidder at a public sale.
vintage	Something from a past era, especially valued for its age and quality.
authentic	Genuine and real, not a copy or imitation.
legendary	Very famous and well known, often through a remarkable achievement.
enthusiasts	People who have a strong interest or passion for a particular activity or subject.
uranium glass	A type of coloured glass containing uranium that glows under ultraviolet light.
carnival glass	A type of pressed glass with an iridescent, rainbow-like coating, often orange in colour.
iridescent	Showing shifting colours that change depending on the angle of light, like a rainbow.
scouring	Searching thoroughly and carefully through many places.
staggering	So surprising or large that it is difficult to believe; astonishing.
verified	Confirmed that something is true, accurate, or genuine.
tentacles	Long, flexible limbs used by sea creatures like squid and octopuses to move or grip things.
swindlers	People who cheat or trick others out of money or possessions.
nifty	Clever, skilful, or particularly well-suited to a task.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - Compound Words and Word Pairs

Two vocabulary words are made up of two smaller words joined together: 'auction house' and 'snowdome.' Find three more compound words or word pairs in Chapter 3. Write them below and explain their meanings.

1. _____

Meaning: _____

2. _____

Meaning: _____

3. _____

Meaning: _____

Activity 2 - Word Families

The word 'authentic' belongs to a word family. Complete the table below with related forms of the word.

Word Form	Example
Noun (the thing)	authenticity
Adjective (describing word)	authentic
Adverb (how something is done)	authentically
Verb (action)	authenticate

Now choose one of the forms above and write a sentence using it.

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Literal Comprehension (Finding Information)

1. Describe the layout of The Trevor Trove. What different spaces does it include?
2. What is the magazine article in Dad's office about? Who is featured in it?
3. Name Dad's four 'faithful collectors' and describe what each one collects.
4. What did Roland first collect, and why did he stop?
5. How did Roland discover Squidape comics?
6. Who is Squidape, and what does he do?
7. Who is Burglar Bill, and why does Roland find him amusing?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Roland says Dad gets 'a crazed look of victory' when he finds something special for a collector. What does this tell us about Dad's personality and what he loves about his work?
2. Roland imagines what it would be like if the stuffed-bird collector married Miss Leadbetter. What does this kind of thinking tell us about Roland?
3. Mr Rumpy collects uranium glass and also has three different diseases. Roland says Dad told him 'that could have something to do with his uranium glass' but he doesn't know why. What do you think Dad meant?
4. Roland says the music boxes make his brain feel 'as if something sharp is scraping it.' What does this description tell us about how Roland experiences loud or busy sounds?
5. Roland describes 'tyre kickers' as customers who look but rarely buy. Why do you think he doesn't think it's right to kick things in a shop, even though that isn't what 'tyre kicker' actually means?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. Dad calls his loyal customers a 'collection of collectors.' Why is this a clever phrase? What does it tell us about how Dad sees his relationship with his customers?
2. Roland discovers Squidape by accident, while his mum is looking at books. What do you think the author wants us to understand about how we sometimes find our passions?
3. The magazine article about 'That Chair!' is included inside the chapter as if we are reading it ourselves. Why do you think the author chose to include an actual article rather than just having Roland describe it?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

1. Roland collects Squidape comics, Mr Frogget collects badges, and Mrs Lester-Crabbe collects music boxes and snowdomes. If you could start a collection of absolutely anything, what would it be and why?
2. The character of Squidape is described as half squid and half ape, but Roland thinks he looks more like an octopus. Design your own superhero by combining two unlikely animals or things. Describe what your superhero looks like, what special powers they have, and what kind of villains they fight.
3. Mrs Lester-Crabbe winds up all her music boxes at once, which causes Roland to cover his ears and concentrate hard. Think of a time when a sound, smell, or sensation was overwhelming for you. How did you manage it?
4. Roland mentions that some customers come to The Trevor Trove once or twice and then vanish, while others keep coming back. What do you think makes a person become a loyal, returning customer rather than just a one-time visitor?
5. Roland says that 'Squidape is my hero.' Who is your hero -- real or fictional -- and why? What qualities do they have that you admire?

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar. Encourage students to listen and respond to each other's ideas.

Passion and Identity

- Dad's collectors are all defined by what they love. Do you think the things we collect or love say something about who we are as a person? Why or why not?
- Roland starts collecting shoelaces and then moves on to Squidape comics. Is it okay to lose interest in a collection and start a new one? What does this tell us about how people's interests change over time?
- The discovery of Squidape happens by accident. Can you think of other examples -- in books, history, or real life -- where something important was discovered by accident?

Sensory Experience and Inclusion

- Roland covers his ears and has to concentrate hard when Mrs Lester-Crabbe plays all her music boxes. How should people around us respond when something is overwhelming for someone else?

- The Trevor Trove is a place where customers can touch things, which is very important to Roland. Why might being allowed to touch and experience things be especially meaningful for some people?
- Roland interacts with Dad's customers and notices things about each of them. What does this tell us about how Roland sees and values the people around him?

Heroes, Villains, and Stories

- Squidape hunts down burglars, swindlers, and crooks. What qualities do you think make a great fictional hero? Is physical strength the most important thing?
- Burglar Bill is described as 'not very clever' because he keeps getting caught. Why do you think stories often feature villains who aren't quite smart enough to win? What effect does this have on the story?
- Roland reads comics about a superhero while living in a story that revolves around an antiques mystery. Can you see any connections between the world of Squidape and the story Roland is living in?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. What does Dad store in the large shed out the back of The Trevor Trove?

- A His car and tools
- B His biggest furniture pieces
- C His Outmoded magazine collection
- D Squidape comics

Answer: B

2. What unusual colour is Miss Leadbetter's hair?

- A Bright pink
- B Silver-grey
- C Bright yellow, like daffodils
- D Ginger

Answer: C

3. What type of glass does Mr Rumpy collect?

- A Carnival glass
- B Stained glass

C Uranium glass

D Sea glass

Answer: C

4. What does Mrs Lester-Crabbe collect? (Choose TWO)

- A Stamps and postcards
- B Music boxes and snowdomes
- C Badges and glass
- D Books and comics

Answer: B

5. What was Roland's very first collection?

- A Comics
- B Stamps
- C Badges
- D Shoelaces

Answer: D

6. What is Squidape a combination of?

- A A spider and an ape
- B A squid and an ape

C An octopus and a monkey

D A shark and a gorilla

Answer: B

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
The Trevor Trove has a shed connected to the shop by a hallway.	True
Dad's office desk is tidy and well-organised.	False
Miss Leadbetter collects bird cages and also keeps many pet birds.	False
Mr Frogget claims to have more than six thousand badges.	True
Mr Rumpy loves carnival glass and has a large collection of it.	False
Mrs Lester-Crabbe has about five hundred snowdomes.	True
Roland found the Squidape comics while looking through a box of old shoes.	False
Burglar Bill frequently escapes from prison in the Squidape comics.	True

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. What does Dad call his loyal, returning customers? What does he mean by this?

2. Describe uranium glass. What makes it unusual?

3. What is the name of the magazine article in Dad's office, and what is it about?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapter 3 activities to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Vocabulary table; analysis of figurative descriptions (e.g. 'crazed look of victory', 'something sharp is scraping it').
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed through word groups and sentences.	Word families activity; compound words activity; comprehension requiring full-sentence evidence-based responses.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Discussion of character description through specific details; analysis of how the author names and describes each collector.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Three-tiered comprehension questions: literal, inferential, and evaluative.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Comparing collectors; analysing the embedded magazine article; open-ended prediction and reflection tasks.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Whole-class and small-group discussion questions on passion, sensory experience, and heroism.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended short answer tasks; superhero design activity; personal reflection writing.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Discussion of how Roland's sensory sensitivity shapes the narrative; how specific details reveal character.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Analysis of the embedded magazine article as a text-within-a-text; discussion of why the author chose this technique.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on collections, heroes, overwhelming sensations, and loyal relationships.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

Sensory Sensitivity and Inclusion

The music box scene with Mrs Lester-Crabbe is a gentle but meaningful moment in which Roland's sensory sensitivity is depicted without drama or judgment. He covers his ears, closes his eyes, and concentrates hard. This is worth discussing with students as an example of a self-regulation strategy. Encourage students to think about what sounds, lights, or sensations they themselves find uncomfortable, and how people can support each other in these moments. This links naturally to PDHPE outcomes around wellbeing and inclusion.

Text Within a Text: The Magazine Article

The embedded 'That Chair!' article from Outmoded magazine introduces a key plot thread and is written in a different register from Roland's first-person narration -- more formal, journalistic, and promotional. Students can be encouraged to notice the contrast in voice and style between the article and Roland's narration. This is an excellent opportunity to introduce the concept of text types and purpose: what is each text trying to do, and how does the language reflect that purpose?

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
Science	Uranium glass is a real material that glows under ultraviolet (UV) light due to trace amounts of uranium oxide. Students could research what UV light is and explore other objects that glow under UV (e.g. scorpions, certain minerals, tonic water).
Visual Arts	Students design their own superhero combining two animals, objects, or ideas. Create a comic strip showing Squidape (or their own hero) solving a crime. Focus on panels, speech bubbles, and visual storytelling.
HASS - Geography	Mrs Lester-Crabbe's snowdomes come from all over the world. Students choose five countries and research what a snowdome from each location might depict. Display as an annotated world map.
English - Media Literacy	Compare the register of the Outmoded magazine article with Roland's narration. What language features make each text sound different? Who is the intended audience for each?

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Students write their own magazine article in the style of Outmoded about a fictional discovery at The Trevor Trove. Encourage formal, promotional language, a headline, and a photograph caption.
Support	Provide a graphic organiser with the four collectors' names and blank boxes for students to fill in what each collects. Allow use of the vocabulary table during comprehension tasks. Offer sentence starters.
EAL/D	Use images to pre-teach key vocabulary including uranium glass, snowdomes, music boxes, and carnival glass. Allow additional time and provide a glossary students can annotate during reading.
Early Finishers	Design a 'Wanted' poster for Burglar Bill, including a description of his appearance, crimes, and any known associates. Write a short scene in which Squidape tracks him down using a clue from The Trevor Trove.

PART 4

Chapter 4: Mum and The Great Miasma

About This Chapter

Chapter 4 is one of the most emotionally warm and thematically rich chapters in the novel so far. It introduces two extraordinary words - prestidigitation and circumloquacious - through Roland's love of language, offers a vivid portrait of Mum's passionate, people-centred personality, and delivers a memorable backstage meeting with The Great Miasma (real name: Jim Bottle). Jim's conversation with Roland about the nature of magic becomes the chapter's philosophical heart, as he explains that becoming a hero is not about transformation through tricks, but through character and action.

The chapter closes with a deliberately foreboding final line - 'not long after that, everything changed' - which signals a narrative shift and creates anticipation. This chapter offers rich opportunities to explore figurative language, character, the nature of performance, and what it truly means to be brave.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to connect students with the chapter's key themes before reading.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever seen a magician perform? What did they do that surprised or amazed you?
- Have you ever met someone you really admired - a performer, an author, an athlete? What was that like?
- Roland's mum says that stories are like 'invisible glue, holding us together.' What do you think she means by that?
- What makes someone a hero? Does a hero have to have special powers, or is it something else?
- Have you ever wished you could transform into someone or something else for a day? Who or what would you become, and why?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapter 4. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
prestidigitation	The art of performing magic tricks, especially sleight of hand; conjuring.
circumloquacious	Using many words without getting to the point; talking around a subject rather than saying it directly.
miasma	An unpleasant or oppressive atmosphere; originally used to describe harmful air or vapour.
dastardly	Wicked and cruel in a sneaky or cowardly way; villainous.
deflated	Feeling suddenly less excited or hopeful; as if the air has been let out of you.
illuminated	Lit up brightly, especially with decorative lights.
elaborate	Very detailed, complicated, and carefully planned or decorated.
foyer	The entrance hall or lobby of a theatre, hotel, or other large building.
backstage	The area behind the stage in a theatre, not visible to the audience.
autograph	A person's signature, especially that of a celebrity given to a fan.
adoring	Feeling great love and admiration for someone.
radiating	Sending out or showing something strongly, as if it is coming from within.
logically	In a way that is clear, sensible, and follows from the facts.
daring	Willing to take risks; bold and adventurous.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - The Longest Words

Two of the vocabulary words in this chapter are unusually long: prestidigitation (17 letters) and circumloquacious (16 letters). Break each word into syllables below, then practise saying them aloud.

Word	Syllable Breakdown (e.g. fan-tas-tic)
prestidigitation	
circumloquacious	

Now write a sentence using each word that shows you understand its meaning.

prestidigitation:

circumloquacious:

Activity 2 - Word Origins

The word 'prestidigitation' comes from the Latin and French words for 'quick' (presto) and 'finger' (digitus). Knowing this, explain in your own words why this is a good name for the art of magic. Can you think of any other words that contain 'digit' and relate to fingers or numbers?

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Literal Comprehension (Finding Information)

1. Roland says his mum collects people. What does he mean by this?
2. What is The Great Miasma's real name, and what is his assistant's name?
3. Describe the theatre where Roland, Mum, and Dad saw The Great Miasma perform.
4. What did Roland want to ask The Great Miasma to do for him?
5. How did the family get to meet The Great Miasma backstage?
6. What did Jim write on the autographed photograph for Mum?
7. What advice did Jim give Roland about how to become like Squidape?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Roland says that Mum 'listens with her heart.' What does he mean by this, and how does it make him feel?
2. Roland describes Jim turning red when Mum was talking about how much she loved his work. Why do you think Jim was embarrassed?
3. Roland says Mum 'practically floated above the carpet' on the way out. This is not literally true. What does this description tell us about how Mum was feeling?
4. Jim says, 'Sometimes what you actually see in front of you is not what you expect to see.' How does this idea connect to both magic tricks and to the way Roland sees the world?
5. The chapter ends with: 'not long after that, everything changed.' Why do you think the author ends the chapter this way? How does it make you feel as a reader?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. Jim tells Roland that if he wants to be like Squidape, he should act like Squidape - be brave, stand up for what is right, and do the right thing. Do you think this is good advice? Why or why not?
2. Roland describes the word 'prestidigitation' as 'like a tongue-twister that's aware of its own importance.' What do you think he means by this? Is it a good description?
3. Mum says that stories are like 'invisible glue, holding us together.' Do you agree? Can you think of a story - real or fictional - that has brought people closer together?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

1. Roland wishes he could turn into Squidape, his hero. If you could magically transform into any person, character, or creature for one day, who would you choose and why? What would you do?
2. Mum collects people and their stories. Think of someone in your life who is a good listener. What qualities do they have? Why is being a good listener so important?
3. Jim says that magic works because the audience sees something they don't expect, and cannot figure out how it happened. Can you think of a time in real life when something surprised you completely and you couldn't explain how it happened?
4. Roland is disappointed to learn that Helen doesn't really turn into a pineapple, but Jim's explanation about the nature of magic and heroism cheers him up. Have you ever had a moment when something you believed in turned out to be different from what you expected? How did you feel, and how did you move on?
5. Jim's advice is: to be a hero, act like a hero. Think of a time - real or imagined - when someone chose to do the brave and right thing, even when it was difficult. Write about what happened and what made their choice heroic.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar. Encourage students to build on each other's ideas and use evidence from the text.

Magic, Illusion, and Truth

- Jim says that magic works by making people believe something that isn't really true. Is it ever okay to trick people? When might deception be harmless, and when is it harmful?
- Jim explains that even though the audience knows it's a trick, they still experience wonder and amazement. Why do you think people enjoy being fooled by magic? What does this tell us about the human need for wonder?
- Roland takes Jim's explanation of magic and applies it to heroism. Do you think the two things are really similar? In what ways might acting bravely be like performing a magic trick?

Heroism and Character

- Jim's advice to Roland is that being a hero is about behaviour, not about powers or transformation. Do you agree? Can you think of real people who are heroic without having any special abilities?
- Roland admires Squidape because he is brave, daring, and always does the right thing. Are these the most important qualities in a hero? What other qualities might matter?
- Roland wants a dramatic stage name for Helen because 'it's not fair that only Jim gets one.' What does this tell us about Roland's sense of fairness? Is he right?

Stories, Connection, and Empathy

- Mum says stories are like 'invisible glue.' What stories - books, films, legends, or family stories - have helped glue your class, family, or community together?
- Mum's excitement when meeting Jim clearly made him a little uncomfortable, but it also made him happy. How can we show admiration for people we look up to in a way that is kind and respectful rather than overwhelming?
- The chapter ends on a foreboding note: 'everything changed.' As a class, predict what you think might happen next. What clues has the author given us in these first four chapters?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. What is The Great Miasma's real name?

- A Jim Smooth
- B Jim Bottle
- C Jim Leadbetter
- D Jim Rumpy

Answer: B

2. What is the word for the art of performing magic tricks?

- A Circumloquacious
- B Illumination
- C Prestidigitation
- D Miasma

Answer: C

3. What did Mum do to prepare for meeting The Great Miasma?

- A Read all his books
- B Attended all his shows
- C Taught herself card tricks from his YouTube channel
- D Wrote him a fan letter

Answer: C

4. What did Jim write on the autographed photograph?

- A To Audrey, best wishes, Jim Bottle
- B To Audrey, keep making magic, Jim / The Great Miasma
- C To Roland, be brave, The Great Miasma
- D To Audrey, from your biggest fan, Jim

Answer: B

5. What does Jim say is the key to becoming like Squidape?

- A Learning magic tricks
- B Finding a good costume
- C Acting brave and doing the right thing so others see Squidape in you
- D Reading every Squidape comic ever made

Answer: C

6. What word does Mum use to describe someone who talks a lot but never gets to the point?

- A Dastardly
- B Prestidigitation
- C Circumloquacious
- D Illuminated

Answer: C

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
Mum collects antiques just like Dad does.	False
The Great Miasma's assistant is called Helen.	True
The theatre was painted bright blue on the outside.	False
Roland wanted Jim to turn him into Squidape.	True

Helen led Roland's family backstage to meet Jim.	True
Jim was very confident and not at all embarrassed by Mum's praise.	False
Jim explained that he really does turn Helen into a pineapple.	False
Mum was so happy after the meeting that she seemed to float out of the theatre.	True

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. How does Roland describe the way his mum listens to people? Use details from the text.

2. What is in Jim's dressing room? Name at least three things.

3. In your own words, explain Jim's advice to Roland about how to become like Squidape.

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapter 4 activities to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Vocabulary activities; analysis of figurative language (e.g. 'invisible glue', 'floating above the carpet', 'tongue-twister aware of its own importance').
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Syllable breakdown of prestidigitation and circumloquacious; word origins activity; analysis of Jim's metaphor comparing magic to heroism.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Discussion of how Roland's distinctive language choices reveal his character; exploring what makes a word sound 'aware of its own importance'.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Three-tiered comprehension questions: literal, inferential, and evaluative.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Analysis of Jim's magic-as-heroism metaphor; inferring emotion from figurative descriptions; predicting what 'everything changed' signals.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Discussion questions on magic and illusion, heroism and character, and stories and connection.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended short answer tasks including transformation writing, listener portrait, and heroic action narrative.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Analysis of how Roland describes Mum through figurative language; how Jim's dialogue reveals his character and wisdom.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Discussion of the foreboding final line as a narrative technique; how the author builds emotional resonance through specific sensory details.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on admired listeners, unexpected surprises, transformation wishes, and personal heroism.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

The Magic-as-Heroism Metaphor: A Key Teaching Moment

Jim's explanation to Roland is the philosophical centrepiece of this chapter and arguably of the novel's early arc. He draws a direct parallel between the magician's art (creating belief in something that isn't literally true) and the hero's practice (acting so consistently and bravely that others come to see the heroic qualities in you). This is a powerful and accessible idea for Year 3-4 students. Teachers may wish to slow down here, re-read Jim's speech aloud, and ask students to unpack it together before moving on to the activities.

The idea connects beautifully to themes of identity, self-belief, and the gap between how we see ourselves and how others see us - all of which are central to Roland's character journey throughout the novel.

The Foreboding Final Line

The chapter ends on a deliberate note of unease: 'I still think of that night. Especially as, not long after that, everything changed.' This is a classic narrative technique - the narrator looking back from a future moment and signalling that something significant is about to happen. Students can be invited to notice how the author has shifted tone in a single sentence, moving from warmth and happiness to quiet foreboding. This is an excellent opportunity to introduce the concept of foreshadowing and to discuss how authors create suspense without giving anything away.

The Word 'Miasma': A Note for Teachers

The word 'miasma' historically referred to poisonous or polluted air thought to cause disease (before germ theory was established). As a stage name, it creates a sense of mystery and menace that is entirely theatrical rather than sinister. Students might enjoy researching the history of the word and discussing why it makes such a good magician's name. This connects to the History strand in HASS at this level.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
English - Performing Arts	Students create a dramatic stage name for Helen, Jim's assistant, following Roland's suggestion that it's unfair only Jim has one. Share and discuss choices as a class.
Drama	Students role-play the backstage meeting scene. Assign roles: Roland, Mum, Dad, Jim, and Helen. Focus on character voice, status, and the emotional arc of the scene.
HASS - History	Research the history of stage magic and famous magicians through the ages. When did magic shows first become popular entertainment? Who are some famous magicians?
PDHPE	Jim's advice connects to the concept of self-belief and identity. Use his speech as a springboard for a class discussion or journal activity: what does it mean to 'act like the person you want to become'?

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Students write a short persuasive speech in the voice of Roland, explaining to a friend why Jim Bottle's advice about heroism is the best advice he has ever received. Encourage the use of vocabulary from this chapter.
Support	Provide sentence starters for all comprehension and short answer tasks. Before reading, pre-teach the two long words using syllable cards. Pair students for the discussion tasks.
EAL/D	Use images to introduce the theatre setting. Provide a simplified paraphrase of Jim's magic-as-heroism speech for students who need support with complex figurative language. Allow verbal responses.
Early Finishers	Write a one-page diary entry from Mum's perspective about the night she met The Great Miasma. Capture her excitement, the surprise of getting backstage access, and how she felt walking out of the theatre.

PART 5

Chapter 5: Stuckness

Chapter 6: Groundhog Day

Important Note for Teachers: Sensitive Content

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the death of Roland's mother. The loss is never stated explicitly -- it is conveyed entirely through Roland's experience of confusion, grief, and the disruption of his routine. This indirect approach is both age-appropriate and emotionally powerful, but teachers should be aware that some students may have experienced bereavement or significant loss themselves.

Before reading these chapters, teachers are encouraged to:

- Check in with your class and any individual students you know to have experienced recent loss.
- Establish a safe, calm classroom environment before reading. These chapters are best read together rather than for homework.
- Have a quiet, low-key plan in place for any student who finds the content overwhelming -- a trusted adult to speak with, a calm corner, or permission to step outside briefly.
- Remind students that it is okay to feel sad, and that we can talk about big feelings in safe ways.

If your school has a counsellor, it may be worth giving them a heads-up before reading these chapters with the class. The Australian Childhood Foundation (childhoodfoundation.org.au) and Beyond Blue (beyondblue.org.au) have resources for supporting children through grief.

About These Chapters

Chapters 5 and 6 together form the emotional turning point of the novel. They are presented here as a combined guide because they function as a single narrative unit: Chapter 5 ('Stuckness') shows the moment everything changes, and Chapter 6 ('Groundhog Day') shows the aftermath over many months.

The author handles the death of Roland's mother with extraordinary restraint and craft. The word 'death' is never used. Instead, readers experience the loss entirely from Roland's perspective -- through the disruption of his list, the empty speech balloon, the frozen adults around him, and his patient, heartbreaking wait on the bottom step. The pineapple, introduced

as a comic prop in Chapter 4, becomes a devastating symbol of grief and the impossibility of magical returns.

These chapters reward slow, careful reading and discussion. The writing is deceptively simple, and the emotional weight builds gradually through accumulation of small, precise details.

Before Reading: Preparing the Class

These prompts are gentler than usual, designed to build emotional readiness rather than predict plot. Use them at your own judgement -- you may prefer to read first and discuss afterwards.

Optional Pre-Reading Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever had a routine or plan interrupted in a way that felt really upsetting? What happened, and how did you feel?
- Have you ever felt 'stuck' -- not knowing what to do next or how to move forward? What helped you eventually?
- Think about someone who has always been there for you. What would a normal morning look like with that person?
- In Chapter 4, Jim Bottle said: 'Sometimes what you actually see in front of you is not what you expect to see.' Can you think of a time when something was very different from what you expected?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapters 5 and 6. Explore meanings during or after reading, as some will have greater impact in context.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
stuckness	A made-up word Roland uses to describe the feeling of being unable to move forward; being frozen in a moment.
miasma	Used here as the magician's name, but the word itself means a heavy, oppressive feeling or atmosphere.
boggled	Wide and staring, as if in shock or disbelief.

rooted	Fixed firmly in one place and unable to move, like a tree's roots holding it in the ground.
groundhog day	A reference to the film Groundhog Day, in which a man relives the same day over and over.
random	Without any particular pattern, purpose, or plan; chosen by chance.
sobbed	Cried in a way that causes the whole body to shake; deep, heaving crying.
foreboding	A strong feeling that something bad is about to happen.
liquid	Used here as a metaphor -- Dad's silent pain eventually became tears.
unstuck	Free from being stuck; able to move forward again.
frozen in time	A phrase meaning someone appears unable to move or think, as if time has stopped for them.
speech balloon	The bubble in a comic strip that shows what a character is saying; Roland uses this when he cannot hear words.

Vocabulary and Language Activities

Activity 1 - Invented Words

Roland uses the made-up word 'stuckness' as the title of Chapter 5. It is not a real dictionary word, but its meaning is immediately clear. What does it mean to you? Why do you think the author chose to invent this word rather than use an existing one like 'paralysis' or 'confusion'? Write two or three sentences explaining your thinking.

Activity 2 - Figurative Language in Grief

The author uses figurative language to describe how Roland and his dad feel without stating their emotions directly. Match each description from the chapters to the feeling it conveys. The first one has been done for you.

Description from the text	Feeling it conveys
---------------------------	--------------------

Dad's silent words 'turned to liquid and came streaming out of his eyes'	Dad was crying; his unexpressed grief finally overflowed as tears.
Dad stood and stared 'like he was frozen in time'	
'His speech balloon was empty'	
Roland's 'legs were rooted to the spot'	
Mum would 'not even he can turn the pineapple back into her'	

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that shows you understand its meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences. These chapters deal with difficult emotions -- take your time and think carefully.

Literal Comprehension (Finding Information)

1. What event was the family preparing for on the morning described in Chapter 5?
2. Describe what Roland remembers about the moment his dad pulled him back into the house. What did he notice?
3. In Chapter 6, where did Roland sit every morning, and what was he waiting for?
4. Who came to help the family, and what did each person do?
5. What did Bunny suggest that eventually helped Roland leave the house?
6. What did Roland find on the kitchen counter when he returned from playing at Leah and Layla's house?
7. What did Dad say to Roland about the pineapple, and how did Roland respond?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. The author never directly tells the reader what happened to Mum. What clues in the text help us understand? List at least three details that suggest she has died.

2. Roland describes his dad's face as looking like 'a character in a cartoon with an empty speech balloon.' Why is this a particularly significant image given that Roland reads comic books?
3. Roland writes a note to Mum every day asking her to call when she gets home. What does this tell us about where Roland is in his understanding of what has happened?
4. Dad is also described as 'stuck' -- he moves around the house putting objects in strange places and staring out the window. How does the author show that grief affects adults as well as children?
5. At the end of Chapter 6, Dad uses Jim Bottle's words about the pineapple to help Roland understand. Why do you think he chose those particular words? What makes them the right ones?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. Roland's morning routine, which was designed to help him cope, becomes the very thing that keeps him stuck. What does this tell us about the double-edged nature of routines -- that they can both protect us and trap us?
2. The author uses the pineapple -- first a comic prop in Jim Bottle's magic show, then something Roland finds comforting to hold -- as a symbol of grief and longing. Why do you think this works so well emotionally? What makes the pineapple such an effective choice?
3. These two chapters contain almost no dialogue, and the writing is stripped back to very simple, short sentences. Why do you think the author made this choice? What effect does it create for the reader?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

These questions ask you to think carefully and respond thoughtfully. There are no right or wrong answers. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

A Note to Teachers

These open-ended questions invite personal reflection on themes of loss, support, and resilience. Before assigning written responses, you may wish to do a brief oral sharing circle so students feel safe before putting thoughts on paper. Remind students that they are always free to write about imagined scenarios rather than real personal experiences if they prefer.

1. Roland finds comfort in holding something unexpected -- a pineapple -- because of its connection to a meaningful memory. Have you ever held onto an object because it reminded you of someone or something important? Write about what it was and why it mattered.

2. Mrs Lester-Crabbe, Arrow Plate, and Bunny all showed up to help in different ways. Think about what it means to be a good friend or neighbour when someone is going through a hard time. What are the most important things you can do for someone who is struggling?
3. Roland stays on the bottom step because he is waiting for Mum to come home. He is not ready to accept what has happened. Think about a time you held on to a hope or wish for a long time before letting go. What eventually helped you move forward?
4. Dad uses Jim Bottle's words to help Roland understand. Think of a time when something you had learned or heard earlier -- a story, a piece of advice, a song -- helped you make sense of something difficult later. Write about what it was.
5. The word 'stuckness' is made up, but it describes a very real feeling. Invent your own word for a feeling that is hard to describe. Write a definition for your word and use it in a sentence.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion or small group work. Remind students to listen with kindness and that everyone's feelings and experiences are different and valid.

Grief and Its Many Shapes

- Roland and his dad both grieve, but in very different ways. What are the differences between how Roland responds to the loss and how Dad responds? What do they have in common?
- Roland doesn't understand at first what has happened. Is it better to protect children from difficult truths, or to be honest with them? When is it appropriate to do each?
- Roland sits on the bottom step for months. Rather than forcing him to move, the adults around him find gentle ways to help. What does this tell us about how we should respond when someone is not ready to be helped?

Community and Care

- Mrs Lester-Crabbe, Bunny, Arrow, Leah, and Layla all try to help in their own ways. Which form of support do you think helped most, and why?
- Arrow Plate sits with Dad on the back porch in silence for long hours. Sometimes people don't say anything -- they just stay. Why might simply being present be one of the most powerful forms of support?
- What does it mean to 'talk with your eyes' or 'listen with your heart'? Is this kind of communication something everyone can do, or does it come more naturally to some people?

The Author's Craft

- The author never uses the words 'death,' 'died,' or 'dead.' Instead, readers piece together what has happened through Roland's experience. Why do you think the author made this choice? Is it more or less powerful than stating it directly?
- The chapter titles -- 'Stuckness' and 'Groundhog Day' -- are both metaphors. What do each of them mean, and why are they good choices for these chapters?
- The pineapple appears in four different chapters, each time with a different meaning. Can you trace its journey through the story so far? What has it represented each time?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. What event was the family getting ready for on the morning described in Chapter 5?

- A A school concert
- B Aunt Camilla's wedding
- C A birthday party
- D Dad's shop opening

Answer: B

2. What did Roland notice about his dad's face when he was pulled back into the house?

- A He was smiling and waving
- B He was yawning and tired
- C His hair was wild and his eyes were boggled and red
- D He was wearing his hat

Answer: C

3. Where did Roland sit every morning for months after the loss?

- A At the kitchen table
- B At his bedroom window
- C On the back porch
- D On the bottom step

Answer: D

4. What object did Roland find on the kitchen counter when he came home from playing?

- A A bunch of flowers
- B A large yellow pineapple
- C A Squidape comic
- D A photograph of Mum

Answer: B

5. What did Roland do every day before leaving the house?

- A Called out for Mum
- B Read a Squidape comic
- C Wrote a note to Mum asking her to call when she got home
- D Watered the garden

Answer: C

6. Whose words did Dad use to help explain things to Roland at the end of Chapter 6?

- A Mrs Lester-Crabbe's
- B Bunny's
- C Jim Bottle's (The Great Miasma)
- D Leah's

Answer: C

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
Roland can clearly remember the wedding itself.	False
Roland was worried they would be late for the wedding if Dad didn't hurry.	True
Mrs Lester-Crabbe came over almost every morning to help the family.	True
Arrow Plate visited and talked loudly and cheerfully to try to cheer Dad up.	False
Bunny suggested Roland write a note to Mum so he could go to play.	True
Roland hugged the pineapple tightly because it was soft and comforting.	False
Dad told Roland that Mum had turned herself into the pineapple.	False
Roland's morning list helped him stay grounded even during the hardest months.	True

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. Why did Roland stay on the bottom step? What was he waiting for?

2. How does the author show that Dad is also struggling with grief? Give two examples from the text.

3. What connection does Dad make between the pineapple and Jim Bottle's words about magic?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapters 5 and 6 activities to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Figurative language matching activity; analysis of how grief is conveyed without direct statement; invented word 'stuckness'.
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Exploration of short, stripped-back sentences as a stylistic choice; discussion of why the author avoids direct language about death.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Activity 1 (invented words); Activity 2 (figurative language in grief); discussion of the pineapple as symbol across chapters.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Three-tiered comprehension questions; identifying textual clues about Mum's death without direct statement.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Comparing Roland's and Dad's grief; tracing the pineapple symbol across chapters; synthesising clues about what happened.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Discussion questions on grief, community, care, and author's craft; listening circle for open-ended reflections.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended short answer tasks including personal reflection, invented words, and community care writing.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Discussion of how Roland's unique perspective shapes what the reader understands; how figurative language conveys emotion.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Analysis of stripped-back prose style; discussion of chapter titles as metaphor; discussion of the pineapple as recurring symbol.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on comfort objects, being supported through difficulty, letting go, and the power of earlier words or stories.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

Reading These Chapters Aloud

Consider reading Chapters 5 and 6 aloud to the class rather than asking students to read independently. The spare, quiet prose has a particular power when heard, and reading aloud allows the teacher to manage the pace and create space for the emotional weight of the chapters to land gently. Pausing after key moments -- the empty speech balloon, Roland on the bottom step, the pineapple -- gives students time to absorb what they have understood before moving on.

After reading, a period of quiet reflection (perhaps two minutes of silent thinking before any discussion) can be very effective with this age group.

The Pineapple as Symbol: Tracing a Motif

By this point in the novel, the pineapple has appeared in three different contexts: as a prop in The Great Miasma's show, as an example Jim uses when explaining magic to Roland, and now as the object Roland cradles in grief. Students who have read carefully will feel the full weight of the pineapple scene precisely because of this accumulation of meaning. A class discussion or short written task tracing the pineapple's journey through the novel so far can be a powerful way to show students how authors build meaning across a text over time.

Supporting Wellbeing: A Note on Grief

Useful framing for classroom discussion:

- Grief is a normal, natural response to loss. Everyone grieves differently, and there is no right or wrong way to feel.
- Roland's 'stuckness' is a very real experience for many people -- children and adults -- who have experienced loss.
- The community around Roland shows what healthy support looks like: presence, patience, gentle encouragement, and respect for a person's pace.
- Students who have experienced loss may find this chapter brings up strong feelings. Validate those feelings while keeping the discussion safe and contained.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
PDHPE - Social and Emotional Learning	Use Roland's and Dad's experiences to discuss different responses to loss and change. What are healthy ways to express and process big feelings? What does a supportive community look like?
English - Creative Writing	Students write a short scene showing a character being supported through a difficult time, without using the words 'sad,' 'upset,' or 'crying.' Focus on showing emotion through action, detail, and dialogue, as the author does.
Visual Arts	Students create an artwork -- a drawing, collage, or mixed media piece -- representing the idea of 'stuckness' or the journey from stuck to unstuck. Share and discuss as a gallery walk.
HASS - Civics and Citizenship	Discuss the role of community in supporting individuals through hardship. What structures exist in our community (schools, neighbours, services) to support people in need?

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Students write a scene from Dad's perspective during the months Roland was sitting on the step. What was Dad feeling? What was he thinking as he watched Roland wait? Encourage deep empathy and use of figurative language in the style of the author.
Support	Provide a visual timeline of events across Chapters 5 and 6 to help students organise what happened and when. Use sentence starters for all written tasks. Allow verbal responses.
EAL/D	Pre-teach the Groundhog Day reference with a brief description of the film. Use a visual sequence of events to support comprehension. Provide a glossary of figurative expressions used in these chapters.
Early Finishers	Write a new chapter title for Chapter 5 or 6 that captures the same theme using a different metaphor. Write a short paragraph explaining your choice.

PART 6

Chapter 7: Coming Unstuck

Chapter 8: Another Visit from Mrs Lester-Crabbe

Chapter 9: The Coronation Snowdome

About These Chapters

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 mark a significant turning point in the novel. Chapter 7 ('Coming Unstuck') shows Roland taking his first genuine steps out of grief - not because the pain is over, but because he finds a way to move forward while still holding on to Mum. The solution - a note on the step so Mum knows where he's gone - is both heartbreaking and tender.

Chapter 8 ('Another Visit from Mrs Lester-Crabbe') introduces the novel's central mystery: a burglary at Mrs Lester-Crabbe's home. Here Roland transitions, almost without noticing, from a grieving boy waiting on a step to someone taking charge and acting. The echoes of Squidape are unmistakable.

Chapter 9 ('The Coronation Snowdome') delivers a beautifully constructed piece of narrative history. Mrs Lester-Crabbe's account of the snowdome weaves together real historical events (the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II) with personal story, transforming the stolen object from a collector's item into something deeply precious. The mystery is now fully established, the stakes are clear, and the adventure can begin.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to prepare students for the themes of these three chapters.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever been nervous about going somewhere new or doing something for the first time? What helped you take that step?
- Have you ever had something stolen or lost something that was really important to you? How did it feel?
- What do you know about Queen Elizabeth II? When do you think she became Queen?
- If you had an object that had been in your family for a very long time, what would make it special to you?
- In Chapters 5 and 6, Roland described feeling 'stuck.' What do you think it might feel like to become 'unstuck'? What would that look like for him?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapters 7, 8, and 9. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
crossroads	A point where two paths or roads meet; used here as a metaphor for a moment where a choice must be made.
torrent	A powerful, fast-moving rush - here used to describe a flood of words.
burglary	The crime of illegally entering a building in order to steal things.
bric-a-brac	Small, old, or unusual objects collected for decoration or interest (revisited from Chapter 2).
commissioned	Officially asked and paid for a piece of work to be created.
commemorate	To do something special in order to remember and honour an important event or person.
coronation	The ceremony at which a king or queen is officially crowned.
reputable	Having a good reputation; known to be honest and reliable.
collision	An accident in which two things crash into each other with force.
encrusted	Covered thickly with a hard coating, such as jewels or ice.
centrepiece	The most important or eye-catching item in a collection or display.
fragile	Easily broken or damaged; delicate.
vicar	A Church of England priest who is in charge of a parish.
detective	A police officer whose job is to investigate crimes and find out who committed them.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - History in Words

The word 'coronation' comes from the Latin word 'corona,' meaning crown. Several words in English contain 'corona' or 'coron.' Use a dictionary to find two more words with this root and write their meanings below.

Word 1: _____

Meaning: _____

Word 2: _____

Meaning: _____

Now write a sentence using the word 'coronation' that shows you understand its meaning.

Activity 2 - Word Pairs: Literal and Figurative

Several words in these chapters are used both literally and figuratively. Complete the table below.

Word	Literal meaning	How it is used figuratively in the text
torrent	A fast-flowing rush of water	A flood of words pouring out rapidly
crossroads		
frozen		
fragile		
rooted		

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Chapter 7: Coming Unstuck - Literal Comprehension

1. What did Mrs Lester-Crabbe suggest Dad do to help Roland and himself?
2. What was Roland's main worry about going to Yumpy-on-Sea for a whole week?

3. How did Roland explain his idea of 'going back to the crossroads' to Dad?
4. What compromise did Roland and Dad reach that helped Roland feel safe enough to agree to the trip?

Chapter 8: Another Visit - Literal Comprehension

5. Why did Mrs Lester-Crabbe's face look so white when she burst into the shop?
6. What happened when Mrs Lester-Crabbe first tried to explain - why couldn't Dad understand her?
7. Describe the three snowdomes that were stolen from Mrs Lester-Crabbe.
8. What action did Roland take when he saw that Mrs Lester-Crabbe was stuck?

Chapter 9: The Coronation Snowdome - Literal Comprehension

9. Describe Detective Danni Champion. How does Roland describe the way she speaks?
10. What were the Coronation Snowdomes made for, and how many were originally produced?
11. What happened to the truck carrying the snowdomes three days before the coronation?
12. What happened to each of the three surviving snowdomes? Describe all three.
13. How did Mrs Lester-Crabbe come to own the third snowdome?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Roland says he 'quietly sweated' when he overheard Mrs Lester-Crabbe's suggestion. What does this tell us about how he is feeling, and why is the word 'quietly' significant?
2. Roland tells Dad: 'it might help you too' when suggesting Dad also write a note for Mum. What does this moment reveal about how Roland is beginning to change?
3. When Mrs Lester-Crabbe bursts into the shop, Roland says 'For a second I thought I'd seen a ghost.' Why is this a particularly interesting choice of words given everything that has happened to Roland?
4. Roland notices Mrs Lester-Crabbe is 'stuck' and immediately knows what to do. How has Roland's own experience of stuckness prepared him to help someone else?
5. Danni Champion asks Mrs Lester-Crabbe to tell her 'the story that goes with the third snowdome,' not just the facts. What does this tell us about what kind of detective - and person - Danni is?
6. Mrs Lester-Crabbe's description of herself looking like 'a yoga ball after half the air has escaped' is a simile. What does it tell us about how she is feeling at that moment?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. Roland uses the metaphor of a crossroads to describe his stuckness. Do you think this is an accurate way to describe grief or being unable to move forward? Can you think of another metaphor that might work just as well?
2. The Coronation Snowdome has both monetary value (it is rare and precious) and personal value (it was a wedding gift). Which type of value do you think matters more, and why? Can something be valuable even if it has no monetary worth?
3. In Chapter 8, Roland shifts from being someone who is helped to someone who helps. Jim Bottle's advice in Chapter 4 was to act like the hero you want to be. Do you think Roland is beginning to do this? Use evidence from these chapters to support your view.

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

1. Roland's idea is to leave a note on the step so Mum knows where he has gone. He needs this before he can move forward. Think about a time you needed something small - a habit, an object, a reassurance - to help you take a big step. What was it, and how did it help?
2. Roland explains the crossroads metaphor to his dad: the only way forward is to go back to where things went wrong and choose a different path. Do you think this is true in real life? Can you always 'go back' and choose differently, or are there times when you simply have to move forward from where you are?
3. Detective Danni Champion asks for the story behind the snowdome, not just the facts. Why do you think stories about objects matter just as much as the objects themselves? Think of an object in your own life that has a story. Write about the story it carries.
4. Mrs Lester-Crabbe begins speaking in French when she is very upset. Why do you think people sometimes struggle to find words - in any language - when they are overwhelmed? Have you ever felt lost for words? What helped you find them again?
5. The snowdome that was stolen is one of only three in existence, and the other two are in a palace and a museum. Write a short paragraph from the point of view of the thief, explaining why they might have wanted this particular snowdome.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar.

Moving Forward and Letting Go

- Roland can't leave until he has written a note for Mum. Is this a healthy coping strategy, or is it a way of avoiding acceptance? Can something be both at once?

- Mrs Lester-Crabbe tells Dad it is 'doing him no good dragging yourself around like you're wading through mud.' Is it always helpful to tell someone they need to change? When does advice help and when can it hurt?
- Roland connects his own stuckness to Mrs Lester-Crabbe's and is able to help her because of it. Can suffering ever make us more capable of helping others? What is the difference between sympathy and empathy?

Objects, Memory, and Value

- The Coronation Snowdome was mass-produced (10,000 were ordered), but only three survived. Does scarcity - being rare - automatically make something more valuable? What else determines value?
- Wayne Lester gave his bride the snowdome as a wedding gift. What makes an object a meaningful gift? Is it the object itself, or the story and intention behind it?
- Mrs Lester-Crabbe says she wasn't so upset about losing the two smaller snowdomes, but losing the third was devastating. What does this tell us about the difference between monetary and personal value?

The Mystery Begins

- The novel has now introduced a crime to be solved, a detective, and a boy who is beginning to find his courage. How does this feel different from the earlier chapters? What kind of story does it feel like the novel is becoming?
- Danni Champion asks for the story behind the object, not just the facts. Is this good detective work? What can a story tell an investigator that a list of facts cannot?
- Roland is about to go to Yumpy-on-Sea - the same town where The Itchy Fingers Emporium is, and where Mr Smedley Smooth lives. What connections can you make between the characters and threads introduced earlier in the novel? What do you predict might happen?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. Where does Mrs Lester-Crabbe suggest Roland and Dad go for a holiday?

- A Cheltenham town centre
- B The Itchy Fingers Emporium
- C Yumpy-on-Sea
- D The Trevor Trove

Answer: C

2. What is Mrs Lester-Crabbe's brother's job in Yumpy-on-Sea?

- A He runs a pub
- B He is a detective
- C He owns an antiques shop
- D He is the vicar

Answer: D

3. Why couldn't Dad understand Mrs Lester-Crabbe when she first burst into the shop?

- A She was whispering too quietly
- B She was speaking French
- C She had lost her voice
- D She was speaking too fast in English

Answer: B

4. How many Coronation Snowdomes were originally commissioned?

- A 1,000
- B 3
- C 10,000
- D 100,000

Answer: C

5. What happened to the snowdomes three days before the coronation?

- A They were lost in a flood
- B They were stolen from the factory
- C The truck carrying them was hit by a runaway van
- D They were smashed in a warehouse fire

Answer: C

6. What was the name of the detective who came to take Mrs Lester-Crabbe's statement?

- A Detective Veronica Champion
- B Detective Danni Champion
- C Detective Wayne Lester
- D Detective Daphne Smooth

Answer: B

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
Mrs Lester-Crabbe's brother lives in Yumpy-on-Sea.	True
Roland was perfectly happy about going away for a week right away.	False
Dad and Roland agreed that both of them would leave a note for Mum.	True
Mrs Lester-Crabbe had been to Yumpy-on-Sea to visit The Itchy Fingers Emporium.	True
All three of the stolen snowdomes were equally precious to Mrs Lester-Crabbe.	False
The snowdome that was stolen had been a wedding gift from Mrs Lester-Crabbe's husband.	True
Detective Champion only wanted the facts - she was not interested in the story.	False
One of the surviving Coronation Snowdomes was given to Queen Elizabeth II herself.	True

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. In your own words, explain what Roland means by 'going back to the crossroads.'

2. What made the Coronation Snowdome so rare and precious? Explain using details from Chapter 9.

3. How does Roland recognise that Mrs Lester-Crabbe is 'stuck,' and what does he do about it?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapters 7, 8, and 9 activities to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Word pairs: literal vs. figurative activity; analysis of simile (yoga ball); discussion of how the author names Detective Champion.
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Coronation word origins activity; discussion of how Mrs Lester-Crabbe's account builds tension through storytelling structure.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Analysis of figurative descriptions of emotion across the three chapters; vocabulary in context activities.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Chapter-by-chapter literal comprehension questions; inferential questions drawing across all three chapters.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Evaluative comprehension; tracing Roland's character arc across Chs 5-9; synthesising the mystery setup across multiple chapters.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Discussion questions on grief, value, objects and memory, and the emerging mystery.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended writing tasks: viewpoint of the thief; objects with stories; the crossroads metaphor in personal experience.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Analysis of how Roland's growing confidence shows in his actions and voice; Detective Champion's approach to listening.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Discussion of how the mystery genre is introduced; Mrs Lester-Crabbe's nested narrative (story-within-story) in Chapter 9.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on taking big steps, objects with stories, being lost for words, and the value of personal belongings.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

Roland's Character Arc: From Stuck to Acting

These three chapters contain one of the most satisfying moments of character development in the novel so far. In Chapter 8, Roland sees Mrs Lester-Crabbe and immediately recognises her 'stuckness' - the very experience that has defined him for over a year. Without being asked, he takes her hand and tells her what needs to be done. This is a pivotal moment: it is the first time Roland acts with the confidence and decisiveness of a hero. Teachers may wish to pause here and ask students to recall Jim Bottle's advice from Chapter 4. Roland is, without realising it, beginning to become Squidape.

Chapter 9 as Historical Fiction: The 1953 Coronation

Mrs Lester-Crabbe's account of the Coronation Snowdome is a beautifully constructed piece of embedded narrative history. The coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on 2 June 1953 is a real historical event, and students may benefit from a brief introduction to who Queen Elizabeth II was and why her coronation was significant. This can be linked to the History strand in HASS, and to the concept of commemorative objects - things made specifically to mark and preserve the memory of important events. The snowdome's journey (from factory to truck disaster to royal palace to museum to wedding gift) gives the object a rich provenance, which is a term used in the antiques world to describe an object's history of ownership.

Key Literary Term: Simile

Chapter 9 contains a striking simile: Mrs Lester-Crabbe 'looked like a yoga ball after half the air has escaped.' This is an excellent example to use when teaching similes, as it conveys a very specific kind of deflation - not complete collapse, but a loss of firmness and shape. Ask students to draw what a half-deflated yoga ball looks like, then discuss how this image conveys both Mrs Lester-Crabbe's physical posture and her emotional state. This is a useful model for students' own writing.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
HASS - History	Research the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. What was significant about it? What was coronation memorabilia, and why did people collect it? Compare to modern commemorative items produced for royal events.
HASS - Economics and Business	Discuss the concept of 'provenance' in the antiques world. Why does an object's history of ownership affect its value? Find an example of a real object whose value increased because of its story.
English - Narrative Writing	Students write a short piece in which an everyday object (a mug, a key, a scarf) has a remarkable hidden history. Model the narrative structure used in Mrs Lester-Crabbe's account: context, disaster, survival, personal connection.
Drama	Role-play the detective interview scene. One student plays Detective Champion, one plays Mrs Lester-Crabbe, and one plays Roland. Focus on listening carefully, asking the right questions, and responding to emotion with care.

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Students research the real history of the 1953 coronation and write a short report comparing actual coronation souvenirs made at the time with the fictional Coronation Snowdome. How plausible is the story? What details has the author borrowed from real history?
Support	Provide a visual timeline of events across Chapters 7-9 to help students track what happens and when. Use sentence starters for comprehension responses. Allow verbal responses for discussion tasks.
EAL/D	Pre-teach 'coronation,' 'burglary,' and 'detective' with images and simple definitions. Provide a short biography of Queen Elizabeth II to support Chapter 9 comprehension. Allow additional reading time.
Early Finishers	Write the missing scene: Roland and Dad both write their notes to Mum before leaving for Yummy-on-Sea. Write both notes in full, in each character's voice, capturing what each person needs to say and how they say it.

PART 7

Chapter 10: Holiday

Chapter 11: The Greasy Pig

About These Chapters

Chapters 10 and 11 are among the most richly textured in the novel. They take Roland - and the reader - out into the world for the first time since Mum's death, and the writing shifts noticeably in tone: there is humour, lightness, sensory delight, and, woven through it all, Roland's particular and wonderful way of noticing and recording everything around him.

Chapter 10 ('Holiday') covers the journey to Yumpy-on-Sea and the first afternoon there, introducing the town, its quirky characters, and the moment Roland and Dad share real laughter together for the first time. Chapter 11 ('The Greasy Pig') is named for the pub where they stay, and carries the story through an afternoon's cycling, birdwatching, and fish and chips by the sea. The chapter is full of wordplay, observation, and quiet grief sitting alongside genuine joy.

Two details quietly advance the mystery plot: Roland spots the yacht Smooth Sailing from the headland, and the final lines follow a postal van and a fishing boat heading in the same direction - a gentle signal that the story's threads are beginning to converge.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to prepare students for the themes and setting of Chapters 10 and 11.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever been on a holiday that you were nervous about at first? What made it better once you arrived?
- What do you notice on long car journeys? Roland turns everything he sees into a kind of list. Do you have any habits or games you play on long trips?
- Have you ever visited a small coastal town or village? What was it like compared to where you live?
- Roland uses binoculars to watch birds. Do you have a hobby that involves paying very close attention to something? What do you notice that others might miss?
- Have you ever made up a word or a silly name for something when you were little? Do you still remember it?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapters 10 and 11. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
sniffing	Making repeated small sniffing sounds, as when crying quietly.
pennant	A long, narrow triangular flag, often seen on boats or at sports events.
hypnotising	So fascinating or repetitive that it captures your complete attention, like being in a trance.
indignantly	In a manner showing anger or annoyance at something felt to be unfair or insulting.
sinister	Seeming harmful or evil; suggesting something dangerous or threatening.
submerged	Placed or pushed beneath the surface of a liquid.
aimlessly	Without any particular purpose or direction; wandering with no clear goal.
provenance	The origin or history of ownership of an object (a key term in the antiques world).
headland	A narrow piece of land that juts out into the sea; a promontory or cape.
cargo	Goods carried by a ship, aircraft, or vehicle.
battered	Coated in batter (a mixture of flour and liquid) and deep-fried; also means worn or damaged.
locusts	Large insects that travel in huge swarms and consume everything in their path; used here as a comparison for seagulls.
hive mind	A group of creatures acting as a single unified force, sharing one collective intention.
unhurriedly	In a slow, relaxed way; without any rush or urgency.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - Adverbs of Manner

Three words in the vocabulary list are adverbs ending in '-ly': indignantly, aimlessly, and unhurriedly. Adverbs of manner describe how something is done. Complete the table below for each word, then add two more adverbs of manner from anywhere in these chapters.

Adverb	Root adjective	What it tells us about how something is done
indignantly	indignant	
aimlessly	aimless	
unhurriedly	unhurried	

Activity 2 - Wordplay and Tongue Twisters

Roland invents a tongue twister from the fish and chip shop: 'fish-and-chip-ship, fish-and-chip-shop.' Try saying it five times fast! Now use the letters and sounds below as a starting point to invent your own tongue twister. It must make some kind of sense.

Starting sound: S (e.g. she sells seashells ...)

My tongue twister:

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Chapter 10: Holiday - Literal Comprehension

1. What did Roland do with his morning list before leaving for Yumpy-on-Sea? Why?
2. Describe what Roland and Dad did with the notes they wrote for Mum before leaving.
3. How does Roland describe the traffic leaving Cheltenham?
4. How does Roland keep himself occupied during the car journey through the countryside?

Chapter 11: The Greasy Pig - Literal Comprehension

5. Describe the town of Yumpy-on-Sea as Roland first sees it. What does the bay look like?
6. What building does Roland and Dad stay in, and what does Roland think it looks like?
7. Name at least five shops or places Roland notices in Yumpy-on-Sea.
8. Who is Bill Turnip, and what is the name of his fishing boat? How does he explain the name to Roland?
9. What does Roland notice through his binoculars while sitting on Crumpety Head?
10. What happens when Roland and Dad eat their fish and chips on the beach?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Roland asks Dad to leave money for Mum so she can catch the train and bus to Yumpy-on-Sea. What does this tell us about where Roland still is in his understanding and grief?
2. When Roland reaches the front path and sees Leah across the road, he starts shaking and wants to go back inside. Why is this particular moment - with Leah waving from across the road - so hard for him?
3. Roland notes that Dad 'stared out at the sea, in that frozen statue way that I haven't seen for a while.' What does this moment tell us about Dad's state of mind, and why is it significant that Roland notices it has been 'a while'?
4. Roland says he could 'almost hear Mum's laughter and see the joy on her face' while sitting on the beach, and reaches out to touch her fingers but only feels grass. How does the author use this moment to hold grief and beauty at the same time?
5. The chapter ends with Roland noticing a postal van and a fishing boat heading in the same direction. Why might the author end the chapter on this detail? What might it be hinting at?

6. Roland describes the seagulls as 'the locusts of the sky' with 'a sinister hive mind.' This is clearly comic, but what does it also reveal about the way Roland's brain categorises and analyses things around him?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. Roland turns the car journey into a list - 'Brown cows. Black cows. More black cows...!' This is both comic and revealing. What does it tell us about how Roland experiences the world, and how does it compare to how most people would describe a country drive?
2. Roland says he unpacked his bag and repacked it himself the night before leaving. He also takes Mum's list and places it on the window ledge of the hotel. What do these actions tell us about the role of control and routine in helping Roland manage anxiety?
3. The moment Roland and Dad laugh together on the bike ride is described as feeling 'really good.' Given everything they have been through, why is this moment important? What does shared laughter do for people in grief?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

1. Roland turns the countryside he passes into a mental list: cows, forests, villages. This is his way of recording and making sense of the world. How do you process and remember new experiences? Do you take photos, write, draw, or use some other method?
2. Roland invented the word 'hubbadub' for a patch of soft grass when he was little. Think of a word you invented as a child, or a made-up word your family uses. If you can't think of one, invent a new word now for something that does not yet have a name. Write a definition for your word.
3. Roland's description of Yumpy-on-Sea is full of small, funny details - the pub that looks ready to step off the kerb, the supermarket that is 'definitely a market but not very super,' the cashier who struggles to smile. Write your own description of a real or imagined place using at least three small, specific, comic details in Roland's style.
4. Bill Turnip names his boat the Spud because fish and chips need both fish and potatoes. Can you think of two other unlikely things that only make sense together, like fish and chips? Write a short paragraph explaining your pairing.
5. Roland reaches out to touch Mum's fingers but only feels grass. He has to 'let the picture go' when he hears Dad's voice. Write about a memory you treasure - something you hold in your mind that you never want to forget. What does it look, sound, or feel like when you go back to it?

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar.

Grief, Joy, and Healing

- Roland still believes Mum is coming. He leaves money and notes for her. Do you think this is harmful, or is it a valid part of the grieving process? Is it possible for someone to know something intellectually but not yet feel it emotionally?
- Roland and Dad laugh together on the bike ride for the first time in a long time. Can happiness and grief exist at the same time? Does feeling happy mean you have stopped missing someone?
- The final beach scene shows Roland reaching for Mum and only finding grass. How does the author make us feel both the beauty of the memory and the pain of the loss at the same time?

Roland's Way of Seeing the World

- Roland describes everything - the town, the supermarket, the fish and chip shop, the seagulls - with precise, funny, and original observations. Do you think noticing the world this carefully is a gift? Are there any disadvantages to being this observant?
- Roland's list-making and routine-following help him feel safe in a new environment. He puts his list on the hotel window ledge the moment he arrives. How do routines help people cope in unfamiliar places or situations?
- Roland is glad the pub is quiet and that no-one stares at him. He is also glad the bus stop is close to the pub in case Mum arrives. How does the author weave Roland's neurodivergent needs naturally into the setting, without making them feel like problems to be solved?

The Mystery Deepens

- Roland spots a yacht called Smooth Sailing from Crumpety Head. Given what we know about Mr Smedley Smooth from earlier chapters, what might this suggest?
- The final image - a postal van and a fishing boat heading in the same direction - is deliberately mysterious. What do you think the author wants us to feel at the end of this chapter? How does this technique build suspense?
- Roland and Dad arrived in Yumpy-on-Sea. Smedley Smooth lives in Yumpy-on-Sea. The Itchy Fingers Emporium is in Yumpy-on-Sea. What predictions can you make about what might happen next?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. What did Roland do with Mum's list before going to sleep the night before the holiday?

- A He left it on the bottom step with the notes
- B He put it in his suitcase for safe keeping
- C He kept it in his pocket and placed it on the hotel window ledge when they arrived
- D He asked Mrs Lester-Crabbe to look after it

Answer: C

2. How does Roland describe the traffic leaving Cheltenham?

- A Fast and exciting, like a racing car
- B Like being caught in a mad machine that would spurt them out into the countryside
- C Slow and boring, like watching paint dry
- D Like a river flowing steadily towards the sea

Answer: B

3. What is the name of the pub where Roland and Dad stay?

- A The Itchy Fingers
- B The Golden Claws
- C Numpties

D The Greasy Pig

Answer: D

4. What is the name of the fishing boat Roland boards at the pier?

- A The Turnip
- B The Spud
- C The Chip
- D The Mackerel

Answer: B

5. What does Roland see through the binoculars from Crumpety Head that is significant?

- A A large cargo ship disappearing on the horizon
- B A nest with three chicks being fed by a parent bird
- C A yellow yacht called Smooth Sailing
- D A police boat circling the bay

Answer: C

6. Why does Roland kick his legs at the seagulls on the beach?

- A He is playing a game with them
- B He trips and falls towards them
- C To scare them away from their fish and chips
- D Dad asks him to

Answer: C

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
Roland packed his own bag the night before the holiday after unpacking Mrs Lester-Crabbe's packing.	True
Roland asked Dad to leave money for Mum so she could get a taxi to Yumpy-on-Sea.	False
The sign at the entrance to Yumpy-on-Sea said 'Worth Visiting.'	True
Smedley Smooth's house looked perfectly normal and not at all impressive to Roland.	False
The Itchy Fingers Emporium was open when Roland and Dad cycled past.	False
Roland had his binoculars back-to-front at first on the headland.	True
The word 'hubbadub' was Roland's made-up name for a bird he saw.	False
Roland and Dad ate their fish and chips at a table inside Numpties.	False

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. How does Bill Turnip explain the name of his boat, the Spud, to Roland?

2. Describe the town of Yumpy-on-Sea using at least three details from the text.

3. What memory does Roland have of Mum while sitting on the beach eating fish and chips?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapters 10 and 11 activities to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Vocabulary activities; analysis of comic figurative language (seagulls as locusts/hive mind); discussion of wordplay and tongue twisters.
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Adverbs of manner activity; discussion of how the list-style narration of the car journey creates both humour and characterisation.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Analysis of Roland's precise, comic descriptions of Yumpy-on-Sea characters and places; tongue twister activity.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Chapter-by-chapter literal comprehension questions; inferential questions drawing across both chapters.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Evaluative comprehension; discussion of how grief and joy coexist; identifying mystery plot threads accumulating across chapters.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Discussion questions on grief and joy, Roland's way of seeing, and the deepening mystery.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended tasks: place description in Roland's style; invented words; treasured memories; unlikely pairings.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Analysis of how Roland's list-making and observational style reveal his neurodivergent way of seeing; the beach memory scene.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Discussion of the chapter's structural arc: anxiety to joy to grief to mystery; the final two-line image as foreshadowing.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on holiday nerves, invented words, memorable places, treasured memories, and unlikely pairings.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

Roland's List-Style Narration as a Literary Device

The car journey sequence - 'Brown cows. Black cows. More black cows...' - is one of the most distinctive passages in the novel so far. It uses Roland's list-making habit as a literary device, creating a comic, rhythmic effect that also reveals character. Teachers can use this passage to discuss how authors sometimes break conventional sentence structure for deliberate effect. Ask students: why doesn't the author just say 'they drove through the countryside'? What do we lose if he does that? This is also an excellent model for students' own descriptive writing - the power of specific, accumulating detail over vague general description.

The Beach Scene: Holding Two Things at Once

The scene near the end of Chapter 11, where Roland reaches out to touch Mum's fingers and only finds grass, is one of the most quietly powerful moments in the novel. It is worth reading aloud and pausing over. The author does something very specific here: the memory is beautiful and the sensation of the soft grass is pleasant, but the absence is absolute. Roland 'holds the picture as long as he can' before letting it go. This is a sophisticated representation of how grief actually works - not as a constant state of sadness, but as a presence that moves in and out of ordinary moments. Students may find it helpful to discuss this before attempting the related open-ended writing task.

Key Literary Terms: Simile and Metaphor Revisited

These chapters are particularly rich in figurative language. The following examples from the text make excellent classroom discussion starters:

Figurative expression	What it means and why it works
The bay was 'slung like a hammock between two cliffs'	A simile that makes the curved beach feel relaxed and inviting, like something designed for resting in.
The pub was 'ready to step off the kerb and climb into the back seat'	Personification - the building is given agency, making it feel eccentric and charming, just like the town.
Seagulls as 'the locusts of the sky' with 'a sinister hive mind'	A comic extended metaphor that mocks Roland's own dramatic over-analysis while also being perfectly accurate.
'My hair whipped back like a pennant on a speedboat'	A simile that captures speed, joy, and freedom in a single image.
The wind 'ruffling the surface the same way Mum ruffles my hair'	A tender simile that ties the natural world directly to Roland's memory of Mum.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
Science - Biology	Roland observes a parent bird feeding three chicks by regurgitating food. Students research how birds feed their young. Which Australian birds use this method? What are the advantages of this feeding strategy?
Geography - HASS	Students draw a map of Yumpy-on-Sea based on the details provided in Chapter 11: the bay, the cliffs, The Park, the shops, the pub, the church, and Crumpety Head. Compare maps as a class - what details did different students include?
English - Descriptive Writing	Using the model of Roland's description of Yumpy-on-Sea, students write a short description of their own neighbourhood or a place they know well. They must include at least three small, specific, comic or unexpected details.
Science - Physics	Roland notices a huge cargo ship that is 'practically invisible' without binoculars. Discuss how distance affects the apparent size of objects. How do binoculars work? What is magnification?

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Students write an extended version of the car journey using Roland's list style, but for a journey they know well (e.g. the trip to school). They must capture at least ten observations in Roland's voice, then write a short reflection on what this style of writing reveals that a conventional description would not.
Support	Provide a simplified map of Yumpy-on-Sea with labels to support comprehension. Offer sentence starters for the descriptive writing task. Allow verbal responses for discussion activities.
EAL/D	Pre-teach key place and character vocabulary using images: headland, bay, pier, binoculars, seagull. Discuss the concept of a coastal village. Allow additional reading time and provide a glossary.
Early Finishers	Write a short scene from Arno Picken's perspective: what does he notice about Roland and Dad when they arrive? What does he think has happened to them? What does he decide to do to help?

PART 8

Chapter 12: Boring

Chapter 13: Dinner at Numpties

About These Chapters

Chapters 12 and 13 cover the second day of Roland and Dad's holiday in Yumpy-on-Sea. They are among the most delightfully comic chapters in the novel, yet they also do important narrative work: both clues that will become central to the mystery - the A-1 Double Plus Company boxes at the Boring jetty and the flashing light in the church tower - are quietly planted here, long before Roland understands their significance.

Chapter 12 ('Boring') opens with a morning routine crisis as Roland insists on having breakfast in his pyjamas, and then takes Roland and Dad on a day trip to the neighbouring settlement of Boring, where they encounter the magnificent Mrs Elvira Fang. Chapter 13 ('Dinner at Numpties') returns to Yumpy for a second fish and chip dinner, closes with the discovery of the flashing light in the church tower, and ends with one of the novel's finest pieces of foreshadowing.

Together these chapters showcase the novel's distinctive blend of comedy, sensory detail, grief, and mystery - all filtered through Roland's wonderfully observant and literal-minded narration.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to prepare students for the themes of these two chapters.

Discussion Prompts

- Has your family ever visited a place with a funny or unexpected name? What was it like when you got there?
- What makes someone's personality really memorable? Think of a character in a book or film - or a real person - who stays in your mind because of the way they speak or behave.
- Have you ever seen something at night that you couldn't explain - a light, a shadow, a sound? What did you think it was?
- Roland notices small, seemingly unimportant details. Have you ever noticed something small that turned out to be a clue to something bigger?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapters 12 and 13. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
subsided	Gradually decreased or became less intense; died down.
irresistible	Too attractive or tempting to be resisted or refused.
exuberantly	In a lively, enthusiastic, and energetic way; with great cheerfulness.
perched	Balanced or positioned on the edge or top of something, often in an unstable-looking way.
coarse	Rough in texture; not smooth or fine.
elastic	Able to stretch and return to its original shape; used here as a metaphor for silence that seems to expand.
belltower	A tower, often on a church, containing bells; also called a belfry.
unstable	Not firmly fixed or settled; likely to shift, fall, or change without warning.
hovering	Remaining in one place in the air, or appearing to float without moving.
latched	Fixed or fastened onto; caught hold of and did not let go.
winking	Opening and closing quickly, as a light does when it flashes on and off.
foreshadowing	Hints or clues in a story about events that have not yet happened.
jetty	A structure extending into the sea or a river, used as a landing place for boats.
signal	A gesture, action, or sound used to give information or instructions; a coded message.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - Place Names and Their Meanings

Chapter 12 visits a settlement called 'Boring.' In real life, there are many towns and villages with unusual names. The author uses the name 'Boring' for comic effect, but Roland also wonders whether the owner of the fishing boat knows how boring Boring really is.

(a) Why is 'Boring' a funny name for a settlement? What makes it comic in this context?

(b) 'Yumpy-on-Sea' is also an invented name. The 'on-Sea' part was added later to attract tourists. Can you think of any real place names in Australia that have been designed to attract visitors or that have funny or unexpected meanings? Write two examples below.

Example 1: _____

Example 2: _____

Activity 2 - Adverbs in Action

These chapters are full of adverbs that bring scenes to life. Match each adverb from the chapter to the action it describes, then choose two adverbs and write original sentences using them to describe a character doing something.

Adverb	What it describes in the chapter
exuberantly	
gradually	
wordlessly	
vigorously	
gently	

My sentence using _____:

My sentence using _____:

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Chapter 12: Boring - Literal Comprehension

1. What happens to Roland when he gets as far as the bathroom door in the morning? Describe what he experiences.
2. Why does Roland insist on having breakfast before his shower, even though he is still in his pyjamas?
3. What does Roland notice that makes him feel better during breakfast, and what does he conclude about bacon?
4. Describe the settlement of Boring. What is there, and what is not there?
5. Describe Elvira Fang. What is unusual about her nametag, her voice, and her manner?
6. What does Roland notice at the Boring jetty as they are leaving? What is the name on the boxes?

Chapter 13: Dinner at Numpties - Literal Comprehension

7. Why does Roland find it difficult to choose from the menu at Numpties?
8. What does Dad order for both of them, and what joke does he make?
9. What do the three warning signs on the beach say, and who has installed them?
10. Describe the flashing light that Roland and Dad notice as they walk back from the cliffs. Where is it coming from?
11. What does Roland whisper to Dad about the light? What is the one word that his mind latches onto?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Roland says he cannot understand why Dad is bothered by him having breakfast in his pyjamas: 'He never worried about it at home, and I was still the same person, and they were exactly the same pyjamas.' What does this tell us about how Roland understands the difference between home and public spaces?

2. Roland says 'bacon stops brain shouting.' He says this in a matter-of-fact way, but what does it really suggest about how sensory comfort - a familiar, pleasant smell and taste - can help regulate anxiety?
3. Dad jokes that the flashing light is a UFO and that the vicar is an alien. Why do you think Dad makes jokes at moments like this? What effect does it have on Roland, and what does it tell us about Dad as a parent?
4. Dad says: 'As your mother would say, we're writing an adventure story in our heads when there's probably a very simple reason for what we've just seen.' What does this comment reveal about how both Roland and his mother see the world? And given what readers know is actually happening in Yumpy, is Dad right?
5. The chapter ends with: 'When I looked back along the beach, I was almost certain I saw someone moving, but Dad was sure it was just a trick of the light.' Why is this a particularly effective final sentence?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. The morning routine crisis is handled with Dad's patience and a creative solution - breakfast in pyjamas, with everyone pretending not to notice. What does this moment tell us about the importance of flexibility and finding workarounds, rather than forcing someone to conform? Can you think of other situations where a creative workaround might help someone?
2. Elvira Fang is introduced through her volume, her upside-down nametag, and her infectious cheerfulness. The author gives her very little page time but she is immediately memorable. What techniques does the author use to create such a vivid character so quickly?
3. The A-1 Double Plus Company boxes appear at the Boring jetty, being transferred from Bill Turnip's boat to a van. At this point in the story, readers may or may not connect this to the boxes in the cave. How does the author use these chapters to lay groundwork without drawing attention to it? What is the effect of planting clues before readers know they are clues?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

1. Roland discovers that bacon can quiet the shouting in his brain. Think about a food, smell, sound, or sensation that has a calming or comforting effect on you. Describe what it is and why you think it works.
2. Elvira Fang is one of the most energetic and joyful characters in the novel. She runs a shop called Fangs in a place called Boring, and her nametag is upside down. Write a short scene - no more than a paragraph - in which Elvira Fang meets another character from the novel. How do they react to each other?

3. Dad suggests there is probably a 'very simple reason' for the flashing light, but Roland is not so sure. Think about a time when you noticed something strange that turned out to have a simple explanation. Describe what you saw, what you thought it was, and what it actually turned out to be.
4. The settlement of Boring is described as having a restaurant with 'a sea view' and 'dumplings' - two things Elvira Fang considers to be the finest things in life. What two simple things do you consider to be the finest? Write a short paragraph in Elvira Fang's enthusiastic style promoting them.
5. The chapter ends with Roland unsure whether he saw someone moving on the beach. Write what might have happened next if Dad had agreed to go back and check, instead of heading back to the pub.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar.

Routines, Flexibility, and Public Spaces

- Roland insists on breakfast before shower, even in pyjamas, because the list must be followed in order. His reasoning is entirely logical. What does it tell us about the relationship between internal logic and social conventions - the unwritten rules about how we behave in public?
- Dad's solution - let Roland have breakfast in pyjamas and pretend everything is normal - is simple but effective. When is it better to bend a rule or convention to help someone, rather than insisting they comply?
- Arno and Dad communicate with their eyes at the breakfast table without saying anything in front of Roland. Why might they do this? Is this a form of respect, or is it slightly dishonest?

Comedy, Character, and Voice

- Elvira Fang only appears for a page or two, but she is instantly memorable. What makes a minor character stick in a reader's memory? Is it appearance, voice, action, or something else?
- Dad's alien joke ('Aliens have finally tracked me down and want me to be the captain of their spaceship') is absurd and funny. But it also shows something about his personality and his relationship with Roland. What does it show?
- Roland rolls his eyes at Dad's jokes. This is a small but significant gesture. What does it tell us about how Roland is changing, and about the relationship between father and son by this point in the story?

Foreshadowing and the Reader's Experience

- The A-1 Double Plus Company boxes appear for the first time in these chapters before we know what they mean. When did you first suspect they might be important? What made you notice them?

- Dad says they have 'no business worrying about other people's business.' Is he right? At what point does noticing something suspicious become a responsibility to act?
- The final sentence - Roland thinks he saw someone on the beach, but Dad thinks it was just a trick of the light - puts the reader in an interesting position. Whose version do you trust more, and why? What does this do to the tension of the story?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. Why does Roland insist on having breakfast before having a shower?

- A He is very hungry and cannot wait
- B The list says breakfast comes first, and changing the order means he might lose track of Mum
- C Arno told him breakfast would get cold
- D He forgot to bring his toiletries upstairs

Answer: B

2. What does Roland discover about bacon during breakfast at The Greasy Pig?

- A It is much better at Numpties
- B It makes him feel too full to concentrate
- C It appears to stop the brain shouting
- D It reminds him of Mum's cooking

Answer: C

3. What is notably missing from the settlement of Boring?

- A A post office and a school
- B A pub
- C A beach and a jetty
- D A restaurant

Answer: B

4. What is unusual about Elvira Fang's nametag?

- A It is written in very small letters
- B It has the wrong name on it
- C It is pinned upside-down
- D It is attached to her hat

Answer: C

5. Where is the flashing light coming from that Roland and Dad notice after dinner?

- A A boat out at sea
- B Smedley Smooth's house on the hill
- C A narrow window in the church belltower
- D The upstairs window of The Greasy Pig

Answer: C

6. What is the one word Roland's mind latches onto when he thinks about the light?

- A Ghost
- B Signal
- C Warning
- D Alien

Answer: B

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
Roland had breakfast downstairs in his pyjamas while everyone pretended not to notice.	True
Boring had a pub, a general store, and a restaurant.	False
Elvira Fang spoke in a very quiet, reserved manner.	False
The restaurant in Boring was called Fangs.	True
Roland saw the A-1 Double Plus Company name on boxes at the Boring jetty.	True
Dad immediately agreed with Roland that the flashing light was a signal.	False
The person Roland saw leave the church was clearly identifiable.	False
The three warning signs on the beach were installed by the Yumpy Improvement Society.	True

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. Explain Roland's reasoning for why he must have breakfast before his shower, even when staying at a pub.

2. Describe what Elvira Fang's shop in Boring looks like, and what she says to Roland and Dad.

3. What do Roland and Dad see and hear as they approach the church at the end of Chapter 13?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapters 12 and 13 to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Vocabulary activities; adverbs in action table; place names activity; analysis of how all-caps text conveys Elvira's voice on the page.
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Discussion of how the author uses typography (capitalisation) and punctuation (exclamation marks) to convey volume and personality; the elastic silence metaphor.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Analysis of the novel's final sentence as foreshadowing; discussion of how a single carefully chosen word ('Signal') can anchor a scene.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Chapter-by-chapter literal comprehension; inferential questions on routine, social convention, Dad's jokes, and the final image.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Evaluative comprehension on foreshadowing and clue-planting; synthesising the A-1 Double Plus connection across chapters.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Discussion questions on routines and public spaces, comedy and character, and foreshadowing and the reader's experience.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended tasks: sensory comfort writing; Elvira Fang meeting scene; trick-of-the-light anecdote; writing in a character's enthusiastic voice.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Analysis of how Elvira Fang is characterised through typography and volume; how Dad's humour reveals his relationship with Roland.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Discussion of how the A-1 Double Plus boxes and the flashing light are planted as clues; the structural function of comic scenes in a mystery narrative.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on comforting sensations, memorable characters, strange sightings, and simple pleasures.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

The Morning Routine Scene: A Different Kind of Crisis

The routine crisis in Chapter 12 is smaller and quieter than the meltdown in Chapter 15, but it is just as revealing. Roland's logic is internally consistent and completely sincere: breakfast must come before shower because that is how the list works, and the list keeps him connected to Mum. Dad's response - finding a creative workaround that honours the spirit of the list while adapting to circumstances - is a model of practical, respectful support. Teachers can use this scene to discuss the difference between insisting on compliance ('you must have a shower first') and finding a path that works for the individual.

The detail that bacon quiets Roland's brain is both funny and genuinely insightful: sensory input (a familiar, comforting smell and taste) can interrupt an anxiety loop. This is a real and well-documented phenomenon, and it is worth naming for students in age-appropriate terms.

Typography as Character: How Elvira Speaks on the Page

The author renders Elvira Fang's dialogue entirely in capital letters, a typographic choice that does the work of a stage direction: we know immediately that she shouts everything she says, cheerfully and without self-awareness. This is a wonderful opportunity to discuss how authors use visual presentation - not just word choice - to convey meaning. Ask students: what would be lost if Elvira's lines were written in normal type? How do the capital letters change the experience of reading her speech? This connects to the broader discussion of how authors control pace, tone, and character through typographic choices.

Foreshadowing: Teaching the Technique

These two chapters contain several pieces of foreshadowing that students may not recognise on a first read, but which become clear in retrospect:

Detail planted in Chs 12/13	What it foreshadows
A-1 Double Plus Company boxes at Boring jetty, being unloaded from the Spud	Bill Turnip's involvement in moving stolen goods; the cave full of A-1 Double Plus boxes.
Flashing light in the church tower	The signalling system used to coordinate the smuggling operation from Yumpy.
A figure leaving the church in the dark	One of the Society members using the tower - likely the vicar's wife Daphne.

Roland almost certain he sees someone on the beach	Someone was indeed on the beach, moving goods from the cave.
--	--

After completing the novel, students can be asked to return to these chapters and identify which details they noticed and which they missed on first reading. This builds metacognitive awareness of how readers construct meaning across a text.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
English - Creative Writing	Students write a short scene featuring a very loud or very quiet character. Challenge them to use typography, punctuation, or sentence length to convey volume and personality without simply stating it.
Geography - HASS	Research real Australian towns or settlements with unusual, funny, or unexpected names. Map them and present findings. Discuss how place names come about and what they can tell us about a place's history.
PDHPE - Health and Wellbeing	Discuss sensory regulation strategies: foods, sounds, smells, textures, and activities that help people feel calm. Connect to Roland's discovery about bacon and the broader concept of sensory comfort as a self-regulation tool.
Visual Arts / Media	Students design a menu for either Fangs (Boring) or Numpties (Yummy-on-Sea) that reflects the character of the restaurant and its owner. Encourage typographic choices that reflect personality.

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Ask students to go back through all the chapters set in Yumpy and list every clue that pointed to the smuggling operation, in order of appearance. Write a short reflection on which clue was the most cleverly hidden, and why.
Support	Provide a simple visual timeline of events across the two days in Yumpy so far, to help students track what has happened and when. Offer sentence starters for comprehension and open-ended responses.
EAL/D	Pre-teach 'belltower,' 'jetty,' and 'foreshadowing' with images and simple definitions. Discuss the concept of signalling - how people communicate over distance without words. Allow additional reading time and verbal responses.
Early Finishers	Write Arno Picken's diary entry for the evening of Chapter 13. He has just come from the church tower. What has he been doing? What does he think about Roland and Dad's presence in the village? Is he worried they are getting too close?

PART 9

Chapter 14: The Itchy Fingers Emporium

About This Chapter

Chapter 14 is the most thrilling chapter in the novel so far, and marks the moment the mystery plot and Roland's personal journey converge into a single, exhilarating action. The chapter delivers two discoveries in quick succession: first, a box of twelve Squidape comics (including the long-sought special issue featuring The Frenchman and his Henchman), and second, a slightly dusty glass ball tucked under a pile of sheet music - the Coronation Snowdome.

Roland's instincts as an observer, his deep knowledge of the snowdome's history, and his quick thinking under pressure are what make the discovery possible. He has become, almost without noticing, exactly what Jim Bottle told him he could be: someone who sees what others cannot, acts when others hesitate, and stands up for what is right. The chapter also introduces Mr Smedley Smooth in person for the first time - and leaves readers with two urgent questions that drive the story forward.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to prepare students for this pivotal chapter.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever been to a market, fair, or swap meet where everyone was searching for something? What was the atmosphere like?
- Have you ever found something unexpected that turned out to be really important or valuable? How did it feel?
- When you are absorbed in a book, a game, or a film, what happens to the sounds around you? Does the world 'muffle'?
- Think about all the characters and objects introduced earlier in the novel. Which threads do you think are about to come together in Yumpy-on-Sea?
- Roland has been described as someone who notices things others miss. Can you think of a time when noticing a small detail turned out to be really important?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapter 12. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
wafted	Drifted gently through the air, as a smell or sound does.
vortex	A swirling mass that draws things toward its centre; a whirlpool-like force.
deranged	Behaving in a wild, uncontrolled, or irrational way.
sirens	In Greek mythology, creatures whose beautiful singing lured sailors to their doom on the rocks.
precariously	In an unstable or dangerous way; likely to fall or fail at any moment.
suave	Charming, confident, and sophisticated in a smooth, polished way.
alias	A false name used by a person, especially a criminal, to hide their real identity.
notorious	Famous for something bad; widely known in a negative way.
absorbed	Completely focused on and engaged with something, to the exclusion of everything else.
anticipating	Looking forward to something with excitement; expecting something to happen.
germinate	To begin to grow and sprout, as a seed does.
demented	Acting in a wild, frantic, or irrational way.
glistened	Shone with a soft, bright, reflected light, as if wet.
stowed	Packed or put away carefully in a safe place.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - Mythology in Language

Roland compares the shouting shop staff to sirens from Greek mythology. The word 'siren' has come into modern English with a new meaning. Write the two meanings of the word 'siren' below - the mythological meaning and the modern, everyday meaning.

Mythological meaning:

Modern meaning:

Can you think of another word that originally came from mythology and is now used in everyday English? (Hints: think of days of the week, planets, or everyday words like 'panic', 'echo', or 'atlas'.)

My word: _____

Its origin: _____

Activity 2 - Villain Names

The Squidape comics in this chapter feature several memorable villain names: The Frenchman, The Great Swindler, Cactus Mack, Burglar Bill, and Plunger Bob. Each name tells us something about the villain. Complete the table below.

Villain name	What the name suggests about them
The Frenchman	
The Great Swindler	
Cactus Mack	
Burglar Bill	
Plunger Bob	

Now invent your own Squidape villain. Give them a memorable name and write two sentences describing what they do and what makes them difficult to catch.

Name: _____

Description: _____

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Literal Comprehension (Finding Information)

1. How does Roland know that Dad is excited about visiting The Itchy Fingers Emporium before they even leave the pub?
2. Describe The Itchy Fingers Emporium. What did it used to be, and what is the layout like inside?
3. What does Dad find in a box about halfway along the first side of the shop? How many are there, and how many are new to Roland?
4. Name four of the Squidape villains Roland reads about in the chapter, and briefly describe each one.
5. What does Roland notice on the table he walks towards near the end of his reading? What is piled on top of it?
6. How much does Roland pay for his discovery, and what does he use to carry it out of the shop?
7. What does Smedley Smooth do when he arrives at the table Roland has just left?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Roland says he knew the item in the box was 'something he knew I'd really love.' How does Dad's long knowledge of Roland - his interests, his passions, his collector's instinct - make him a good father in this moment?
2. Roland describes the crowd in the shop as 'giving off enough energy to power the lights in the room.' What does this tell us about the shared excitement of collectors on a treasure hunt?
3. Roland spots the snowdome from a distance while still reading his comics. The author describes it as being 'like a trick from The Great Miasma - I was seeing something which ought not to be there.' Why is this a particularly powerful comparison to use at this moment in the story?
4. Smedley Smooth arrives at the table and becomes increasingly frantic when he cannot find what he is looking for. Roland watches him 'inhale deeply, hold his breath and close his eyes.' What does Roland recognise in that moment, and why?

5. Roland ends the chapter with two questions rather than answers: what is the snowdome doing there, and why is Smedley Smooth looking for it? Why do you think the author chooses to end the chapter with questions rather than a resolution?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. Think back to Jim Bottle's advice in Chapter 4: to become like Squidape, act like Squidape. How does Roland's behaviour in Chapter 12 - spotting the snowdome, acting quickly and quietly, protecting it - demonstrate that he has taken this advice to heart? Use specific examples from the text.
2. The Squidape comics Roland reads in the chapter all feature villains who are either greedy, deceptive, or both. How do these villains mirror the real-world antagonist in the novel? What similarities can you find between, say, The Great Swindler and Mr Smedley Smooth?
3. Roland reads the comics in a crowd but becomes completely absorbed - 'the noise of the crowd blurred to a muffle as the characters came to life in front of me.' What does this tell us about the power of reading and stories? Have you ever experienced this kind of total immersion in a book?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

1. Roland has been searching for The Frenchman and his Henchman - a special issue he had read about but never seen - for a long time. Think about something you have been looking for or waiting for. Write about the moment you finally found or received it, or imagine what it would feel like if you did.
2. Smedley Smooth arrives at the shop and is mobbed like a celebrity. Roland watches him perform - air-kissing, drawing out his vowels, gripping people in elaborate embraces. Write a character description of Smedley Smooth based only on what Roland observes in this chapter. Use specific details from the text.
3. Roland uses a comic box as a hiding place for the snowdome - a stroke of practical thinking under pressure. Think of a time when you had to think quickly in order to solve a problem or protect something important. What did you do, and did it work?
4. The Itchy Fingers Emporium is a former cinema now packed with collectables. Imagine you are designing your ideal second-hand or collectables shop. Where would it be? What would it look like? What kinds of things would you sell? Write a description or draw a floor plan and label it.
5. Roland ends the chapter asking two questions: what is the snowdome doing there, and why is Smedley Smooth looking for it? Write your own theory answering both questions. Use clues from across the whole novel to support your thinking.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar.

The Thrill of the Hunt

- Roland describes the crowd in the shop as being drawn by 'the force of the hunt, the scent of a bargain, the thrill of discovery.' Why do you think hunting for something makes finding it so much more satisfying than just buying it new?
- Dad is surrounded by friends from both LIAR and SAD in The Itchy Fingers Emporium, and Roland says it is 'the happiest I'd seen him in ages.' What does this tell us about the importance of shared passions and community in helping people recover from grief?
- Roland spots the snowdome partly because he knows exactly what to look for. How does deep knowledge - whether of comics, antiques, or anything else - change the way you see the world around you?

Heroes, Villains, and the Real World

- The Squidape comics Roland reads in this chapter feature villains who are greedy, deceptive, and smooth-talking. How does the author use these comic villains to prepare us for Smedley Smooth and the real mystery? Is this a clever structural choice?
- Roland acts quietly and carefully - he does not shout or draw attention to his discovery. Is this the bravest kind of heroism? Is it possible to be brave in a quiet way?
- Smedley Smooth clearly knows the snowdome should be there and is panicking when it is not. What does his reaction tell us about his involvement in the theft? At what point does wanting something become wrongdoing?

The Power of Stories and Reading

- Roland reads twelve comics in a crowded, noisy shop and becomes completely absorbed. Have you ever been so deep inside a book that you lost track of where you were? What was the book, and what made it so absorbing?
- The Squidape comics have been a thread running through the entire novel. How has Roland's love of Squidape shaped who he is becoming? Could he have found the snowdome without being a collector and a reader?
- Roland's mum said stories are 'invisible glue, holding us together.' In Chapter 12, a comic book leads Roland to a stolen treasure. Can you think of any other examples - real or fictional - where a story led someone to something important?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. What did The Itchy Fingers Emporium used to be before it became an antiques shop?

- A A post office
- B A cinema
- C A warehouse
- D A church

Answer: B

2. How many Squidape comics does Roland find in the box?

- A Six
- B Ten
- C Twelve
- D Nine

Answer: C

3. What is the name of the Squidape villain who turns out to be a dental hygienist?

- A Plunger Bob
- B The Great Swindler
- C Burglar Bill
- D Cactus Mack

Answer: D

4. What was stacked on top of the snowdome on the table?

- A Old magazines
- B Boxes of comics
- C Old sheet music
- D Stacks of crockery

Answer: C

5. How much does Roland pay for the snowdome?

- A Two pounds

- B Five pounds
- C Ten pounds
- D Fifty pence

Answer: B

6. What does Smedley Smooth do when he cannot find what he is looking for on the table?

- A He demands to speak to the manager
- B He accuses Roland of stealing
- C He breathes deeply, clenches his hands, and walks stiffly away
- D He bursts into tears and leaves the shop

Answer: C

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
Dad woke up calm and unhurried the morning they visited The Itchy Fingers Emporium.	False
The Itchy Fingers Emporium had two floors, with a balcony upstairs.	True
Roland already owned all twelve of the Squidape comics in the box.	False
The special issue The Frenchman and his Henchman was one Roland had read about but never seen.	True
Plunger Bob stole gold jewellery from a museum.	False
Roland spotted the snowdome from the stairs where he was reading.	True
Roland loudly called out to Dad across the shop when he found the snowdome.	False
Dad immediately knew what the snowdome was when Roland showed it to him.	True

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. How does Roland recognise that the snowdome is likely to be Mrs Lester-Crabbe's and not one of the other two surviving Coronation Snowdomes?

2. Describe what Smedley Smooth looks like and how he behaves when he enters The Itchy Fingers Emporium.

3. What are the two questions Roland asks at the end of the chapter?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapter 12 activities to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Vocabulary activities; mythology in language activity; analysis of villain names as character shorthand.
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Discussion of how similes and mythological comparisons (sirens, vortex) intensify atmosphere; villain name analysis activity.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Analysis of how the author names and introduces Smedley Smooth through Roland's precise, comic observations.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Literal and inferential comprehension questions; identifying and explaining textual clues about Smedley's guilt.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Evaluative comprehension; synthesising clues from across the novel; comparing comic villains to real-world antagonist.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Discussion questions on the thrill of the hunt, heroism, and the power of stories and reading.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended tasks: character description of Smedley; mystery theory; ideal shop design; villain invention.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Analysis of how Roland's narration captures the atmosphere of the shop and introduces Smedley through observed behaviour rather than direct description.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Discussion of the chapter's two-discovery structure; the use of the Squidape comics as a mirror for the real plot; ending on unanswered questions.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on finding something long-sought; quick thinking under pressure; becoming absorbed in a story.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

The Comics as a Mirror: Structural Parallels

Chapter 12 contains one of the novel's most elegant structural devices. As Roland reads through the Squidape comics - The Frenchman, The Great Swindler, Cactus Mack - the real villain, Smedley Smooth, walks into the shop and enacts his own version of the same patterns: smooth charm, deceptive performance, and covert greed. Teachers may wish to spend time mapping the comic villains against Smedley Smooth as a class activity. Ask students: which comic villain is most like Smedley, and why? This is an excellent way to introduce the literary concept of structural mirroring, where the author uses one part of a text to comment on another.

Roland as Hero: The Payoff of the Character Arc

Chapter 12 is the moment Roland's character arc pays off. From the boy who could not leave the bottom step, he has become someone who spots a stolen treasure in a crowded room, acts quickly without drawing attention, and calmly deduces its significance. Each skill he uses - deep knowledge of the snowdome's history, careful observation, quiet decisiveness - has been built across the preceding chapters. Teachers may wish to trace this arc explicitly with students, asking them to find evidence from Chapters 1-11 that has prepared Roland for exactly this moment.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
English - Creative Writing / Comics	Students create their own two-page Squidape comic strip featuring a new villain from Activity 2. Focus on visual storytelling: panels, action lines, speech bubbles, and a satisfying resolution.
HASS - Economics	Discuss the concept of market value versus sentimental value using the snowdome as an example. If someone offered to buy Mrs Lester-Crabbe's snowdome for a large sum of money, should she sell it? Why or why not?
Visual Arts	Students design the cover of The Frenchman and his Henchman - the special Squidape issue Roland discovers. Consider composition, colour, and how to create excitement and mystery using only an image and a title.
HASS - Civics / Law	Roland finds a stolen object and removes it from the shop. Is this the right thing to do? Discuss what the correct legal procedure would be when someone finds a stolen item. What should Roland and Dad do next?

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Ask students to write a detailed literary essay (two to three paragraphs) tracing Roland's development from Chapter 1 to Chapter 12. How has he changed? What has made the change possible? Use specific evidence from at least four chapters.
Support	Provide a character comparison table with Smedley Smooth on one side and a comic villain on the other, with prompts to help students identify similarities. Offer sentence starters for comprehension responses.
EAL/D	Pre-teach the concept of a 'villain' using familiar examples from films or picture books. Discuss what makes a villain recognisable. Allow verbal responses for discussion tasks. Provide a glossary of the mythological terms used in the chapter.
Early Finishers	Write the scene from Smedley Smooth's perspective: he arrives at The Itchy Fingers Emporium expecting to find the snowdome, and discovers it is gone. What is he thinking? What does he do next? Use the character details established in earlier chapters to keep his voice consistent.

PART 10

Chapter 15: Signs

Chapter 16: The Cave

Chapter 17: Through the Hedge

About These Chapters

Chapters 13, 14, and 15 form the investigation sequence of the novel - a fast-paced trio of chapters in which Roland moves from curious observer to active sleuth. Each chapter advances the mystery further, and together they deliver a near-complete picture of what is happening in Yumpy-on-Sea, even as new questions emerge about who is responsible and why.

Chapter 13 ('Signs') shows Roland making a critical deduction from the village brochure: the geology warning and the 'remarkably stable' claim contradict each other, which means the warning signs on the beach are not what they appear. Chapter 14 ('The Cave') delivers the story's most heart-pounding action sequence, as Roland discovers a cave full of boxes and narrowly avoids being discovered. Chapter 15 ('Through the Hedge') completes the investigation with two major revelations: the identity of the local smuggling network, and the surprise twist that the Yumpy Improvement Society - the village's beloved community group - is the very organisation at the centre of it all.

These chapters also contain one of the novel's most emotionally significant moments: Roland's breakdown when he realises he has broken his morning routine. This passage is handled with extraordinary honesty and compassion, and rewards careful attention in the classroom.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to prepare students for the investigation, contradiction, and community themes in these chapters.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever noticed two signs or messages that said opposite things? What did you do?
- What do you know about smuggling? When do you think smuggling happened in history, and does it still happen today?
- Have you ever noticed something suspicious that turned out to have an innocent explanation? Or something innocent that turned out to be suspicious?

- Have you ever been so excited about something that you forgot an important habit or routine? How did it feel when you realised?
- If you were investigating a mystery in a small village, what kinds of people would you ask questions of, and why?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapters 13, 14, and 15. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
geology	The scientific study of the Earth's structure, substance, and history, especially rocks and landforms.
tremor	A small earthquake; a shaking or vibrating movement of the ground.
remarkably	In a way that is surprising or extraordinary; notably.
contradict	To say or suggest the opposite of something; to be in conflict with another statement.
nefarious	Wicked, criminal, or morally wrong; typically used to describe unlawful scheming.
skulduggery	Dishonest or secretive behaviour; sneaky or underhanded activity.
enigmatically	In a mysterious way that is difficult to understand or interpret.
audible	Loud enough to be heard; able to be detected by the ear.
vigorously	In a strong, energetic, and forceful way.
moored	Tied or anchored securely, as a boat is tied to a dock.
obscured	Hidden from view, or made difficult to see or understand.
co-ordinates	Organises and manages different people and activities so they work together effectively.
fixated	Thinking about something constantly in an obsessive way; unable to stop focusing on it.
geologist	A scientist who studies the Earth's physical structure and substances, especially rocks.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - The Language of Deception

Chapter 15 uses two wonderful words for dishonest behaviour: 'nefarious' and 'skulduggery.' Both are unusual, expressive words that carry strong connotations. Complete the table below for each word.

Word	Definition in your own words	Use it in a sentence
nefarious		
skulduggery		

Now think of two more words that mean something is dishonest or underhand. Write them below.

Word 1: _____ Word 2: _____

Activity 2 - Roland's List: Connectives and Inference

Roland makes a numbered list of odd things he has noticed at Yumpy. For each item, he asks a question. This is a good model for detective thinking. Read items 1-5 from his list in Chapter 14, then write one additional question for each that Roland might also have asked.

Roland's observation	One more question Roland could ask
1. Flashing light in the tower.	
2. The cave with a ladder.	
3. Snowdomes found in unexpected places.	

4. Boxes full of collectables.	
5. Possible smuggling?	

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Chapter 13: Signs - Literal Comprehension

1. What does Roland notice about the photo in the Yumpy brochure, and what clue does it give him about the flashing light?
2. What does the brochure say about the geology of the Yumpy area? What word does it use to describe the stability of the ground?
3. Why does Roland find the beach warning signs confusing when compared to what the brochure says?
4. Who produced the village brochure?

Chapter 14: The Cave - Literal Comprehension

5. Describe the inside of the cave. What three things does Roland notice when his eyes adjust to the light?
6. What is printed on all the boxes in the cave?
7. What does Roland find inside the second box he opens?
8. What does Roland do when he hears a noise from the direction of the ladder?
9. How does Roland know which snowdome he has found, even in the dark?

Chapter 15: Through the Hedge - Literal Comprehension

10. What does Roland realise when he looks at the hill on the northern side of the village?
11. Name all four members of the Yumpy Improvement Society that Roland and Dad identify by the end of Chapter 15.
12. What does Hal the restaurant owner reveal about the Yumpy Improvement Society?
13. What happens to Roland when he realises he has broken his morning routine?
14. Why does Roland realise he does not just want to stay in Yumpy to solve the mystery?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Roland's brain 'kept jumping from one thing to another' while he sat in The Park. Based on what he has seen and found, why do you think his mind is racing? What clues are beginning to connect?
2. The contradicting messages - the brochure saying the area is 'remarkably stable' and the signs warning people away from the cave - are produced by the same organisation. What does this suggest about the Yumpy Improvement Society at this point in the story?
3. Roland uses the Squidape comic 'On the Trail of Joss and Jem' to make sense of what he has found. What does this tell us about the role his reading has played in preparing him to be an investigator?
4. When Roland discovers he has broken his routine, Dad says, 'You're a brave, brave boy, Roland, and I love you so much.' Why does he say this, and why does Roland find it confusing?
5. Dad says the best person to ask about the Yumpy Improvement Society is someone in a restaurant. Why is this a clever idea? What do restaurant workers often know that others do not?
6. At the end of Chapter 15, Roland realises he is reluctant to go home - not just because of the mystery, but because of what might be waiting for them. What does he mean, and what does this tell us about where he still is emotionally?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. The Yumpy Improvement Society turns out to be genuinely benevolent - it has fixed the church roof, built a playground, and is painting the village. Yet it also seems to be at the centre of the smuggling operation. How does the author use this revelation to complicate the reader's understanding of guilt and innocence? Is it possible for an organisation to do both good and bad things at once?
2. Roland's meltdown when he realises he broke his routine is depicted in visceral physical detail: shaking like a jackhammer, howling, sweating. Why do you think the author chose to include this scene here, in the middle of an exciting investigation sequence?
3. Roland's detective method relies heavily on list-making, cross-referencing details, and asking questions. Do you think this is a particularly effective way of investigating a mystery? What other approaches might a detective use that Roland does not?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

1. Roland notices a contradiction between the village brochure and the warning signs on the beach. Think of a time when two things you were told turned out to contradict each other. How did you figure out which one was true - or whether either of them was?
2. When Roland hides in the tunnel and hears someone coming down the ladder, he has to stay completely still and silent. Write about what you think he might be feeling in that moment. Use specific physical sensations (heart rate, breathing, temperature) to describe the experience.
3. The Yumpy Improvement Society has done many good things for the village, but is also involved in something suspicious. Do you think the people involved are villains? Write your own theory about what is really going on, using evidence from across these chapters.
4. Dad's idea to go to the restaurant and let Hal do the talking is described by Roland as genius. Think of a clever strategy someone has used - in a book, a film, or real life - to find out information without asking directly. Describe the strategy and why it worked.
5. Roland uses his list to organise his thoughts when he cannot sleep. Write your own investigator's list for a mystery you invent, or for the events in the novel. Include at least five observations and a question for each.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar.

Observation, Deduction, and Detective Thinking

- Roland notices the contradiction in the brochure that no one else seems to have spotted. What kind of thinking allows someone to make this kind of deduction? Is it something you can learn, or is it a natural ability?
- Roland compares the cave to the smuggler's cave in a Squidape story. Is it helpful or dangerous for a young investigator to use fictional stories as models for real situations? What could go wrong?
- Dad gathers information by going to a restaurant and letting Hal talk. Is indirect questioning more or less honest than direct questioning? Are there ethical limits to how information should be gathered?

Community, Belonging, and Moral Complexity

- The Yumpy Improvement Society includes almost every person in the village - Hal, Myra, Arno, Daphne, and Bill. If everyone in a community is involved in something, does that make it more or less acceptable? Who decides what a community is allowed to do?

- Arno the innkeeper has been kind and welcoming to Roland and Dad, and yet he appears to be part of the smuggling operation. How does this change the way you feel about him? Can a person be genuinely good and still do something wrong?
- The Society's stated purpose is to raise money for the village - the church roof, the playground, the painted houses. Does a good purpose justify questionable methods? Why or why not?

Anxiety, Routine, and Recovery

- Roland's meltdown is triggered not by danger or sadness, but by realising he has broken his morning routine. For some students, this may resonate deeply. Why do you think disrupted routines can cause such a strong physical and emotional response?
- Dad holds Roland's hand and waits until the storm passes, then helps him back to normal gently and without judgment. What does this model about how to support someone who is overwhelmed?
- After the meltdown, Dad says Roland is brave. Roland does not understand why. What do you think Dad means? In what sense might Roland's willingness to keep going, even knowing his routine might be disrupted, be an act of bravery?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. What does the village brochure say about the geology of the Yumpy area?

- A The cliffs are extremely dangerous and unstable
- B There has been a tremor every year for centuries
- C The area is remarkably stable and hasn't had a tremor in 150 years
- D Rockfalls are common and unavoidable

Answer: C

2. What company name is printed on all the boxes in the cave?

- A The Yumpy Trading Company
- B The A-1 Double Plus Company
- C Smooth Antiques Ltd

D The Itchy Fingers Emporium

Answer: B

3. What does Roland find inside the second box he opens in the cave?

- A Tools, cutlery and old books
- B A cricket bat, a postcard and old coins
- C An autographed cricket ball, a picture frame made of seashells, and a snowdome
- D The Coronation Snowdome

Answer: C

4. Whose house sits on the hill directly above the cave?

- A Bill Turnip's
- B Arno Picken's

- C Daphne Crabbe's
- D Myra Dempsey's

Answer: D

5. Who does Hal identify as the person in charge of the Yumpy Improvement Society?

- A Arno Picken
- B Myra Dempsey
- C Bill Turnip
- D Daphne Crabbe

Answer: D

6. What triggers Roland's meltdown in Chapter 15?

- A He is frightened by someone chasing them
- B He realises he has left the snowdome behind in the cave
- C He realises he has broken his morning routine for the first time in a long time
- D He sees Arno carrying boxes and feels betrayed

Answer: C

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
The village brochure was produced by the Yumpy Tourism Board.	False
The cave was approximately the same size as Roland's bedroom at home.	False
Roland was able to clearly see who came down the ladder into the cave.	False
The snowdome Roland found in the cave said 'Greetings from China' on the side.	True
Myra Dempsey's house is on the hill directly above the cave.	True
Hal the restaurant owner told Dad that not everyone in the village is a member of the Society.	False
The Yumpy Improvement Society had raised money to repair the church roof.	True
At the end of Chapter 15, Roland is eager to go home immediately to solve the mystery there.	False

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. What are the five items on Roland's 'Odd things I have seen at Yumpy' list? List them briefly.

2. How does Roland know which snowdome he has found in the cave, even though it is too dark to read the label?

3. Name the four members of the Yumpy Improvement Society committee identified in Chapter 15, and what role each plays.

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapters 13, 14, and 15 to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Vocabulary activities; deception language activity (nefarious, skulduggery); analysis of how Roland's list models detective reasoning.
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Discussion of how the physical description of Roland's meltdown (jackhammer, earthquake, howling) conveys emotional experience through bodily sensation.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Activity 2: Roland's list as a model for connective questioning and inference; discussion of how enigmatic single-word sentences ('Ladder') create comic effect.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Chapter-by-chapter literal comprehension questions; inferential questions drawing across all three chapters.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Synthesising the full picture of the Yumpy Improvement Society; evaluative comprehension on moral complexity; detective list writing.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Discussion questions on detective thinking, community ethics, and anxiety and recovery.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended tasks: hiding in the tunnel (sensory writing); investigator's list; moral theory about the Society; indirect questioning strategy.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Analysis of how the meltdown scene reveals Roland's inner world; how Dad's single-word prompt ('Pyjamas') functions as both comedy and care.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Discussion of how the contradiction in the brochure is constructed as a plot device; the structural function of the meltdown scene within the investigation arc.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on contradictions, physical fear responses, community ethics, and the power of observation.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

The Meltdown Scene: Honesty and Representation

The scene in which Roland realises he has broken his routine is one of the most unflinching and honest depictions of an autistic meltdown in children's literature. The author does not soften it or resolve it quickly. Roland shakes like a jackhammer, howls, sweats, and experiences flashes of Mum and the sounds of the empty speech balloon day - all simultaneously. Teachers should be aware that some students may find this scene distressing, while others - particularly those with similar experiences - may find it profoundly validating.

Key points for classroom discussion: the meltdown is not a 'tantrum' or an overreaction - it is a physiological response Roland cannot control. Dad's response is a model of appropriate support: he holds Roland's hand, waits, does not try to argue or reason his way through it, and when it is over, he gently guides Roland back to routine (shower, dry, dress). Roland's own observation that he does not feel brave is important: bravery is not the absence of these experiences, but the willingness to keep going despite them.

The Moral Complexity of the Yumpy Improvement Society

The revelation that the Yumpy Improvement Society is both the village's beloved community fundraiser and the organisation behind the suspicious cave activity is one of the novel's most sophisticated plot moves. It resists the simple villain/hero binary that the Squidape comics operate on, and asks readers to hold two contradictory ideas at once: these people have done genuinely good things, and they are also doing something suspicious. At this age level, this kind of moral complexity is worth dwelling on. The society's full intentions are not yet clear - teachers may wish to hold discussion open and resist resolving it before the novel does.

A Note on 'Pyjamas': Comedy and Parenting

Dad's single-word interruption - 'Pyjamas' - as Roland races for the door is one of the funniest lines in the novel, and also one of the most tender. In three syllables, it tells us everything about the relationship between father and son: Dad understands Roland's urgency, shares his excitement, and yet remains the calm, grounding presence who stops Roland from embarrassing himself. This is worth pointing out to students as an example of how a single, precisely chosen word can do enormous narrative work.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
HASS - Civics and Citizenship	The Yumpy Improvement Society is a community organisation that raises money for local projects. Research a real community organisation or local council in your area. What projects have they funded? How do they raise money?
Science - Earth and Space	Roland reads about geology and earth tremors. Research what causes earthquakes and tremors. What is the difference between a tremor and an earthquake? Are there places in Australia where tremors occur?
English - Procedural Writing	Roland's investigator's list is a model for procedural note-taking. Students write their own 'detective's notebook' entry for a mystery they invent, using Roland's format: observation + questions. Focus on precision, specificity, and logical sequencing.
PDHPE - Mental Health and Wellbeing	Roland's meltdown and recovery provide a springboard for discussing what happens in our bodies when we feel overwhelmed, and what strategies help us return to calm. Connect to school wellbeing frameworks and self-regulation vocabulary.

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Students write a formal report, in the style of Detective Danni Champion, summarising the evidence gathered in Chapters 12-15 and outlining the most likely theory of what has happened. Include suspects, evidence, and outstanding questions.
Support	Provide a visual map of Yumpy-on-Sea with the key locations (cave, hill, post office, pub, Emporium, church) labelled to support comprehension of the spatial relationships between places. Offer sentence starters for written responses.
EAL/D	Pre-teach 'smuggling' and 'community organisation' with simple definitions and images. Provide a simplified version of the Yumpy Improvement Society reveal for students who need support with the plot complexity. Allow verbal responses.
Early Finishers	Write the scene from Arno Picken's perspective: he is in the cave carrying a box when Roland hides in the side tunnel. What is he thinking? Does he suspect anything? Write the scene from the moment he comes down the ladder to the moment he leaves.

PART 11

Chapter 18: Back at Home

Chapter 19: Unstuck

Chapter 20: Surprise!

Important Note for Teachers: Emotionally Significant Content

Chapter 19 ('Unstuck') contains the emotional climax of Roland's grief journey. It is the chapter in which Roland, for the first time, fully accepts that Mum is not coming back. This acceptance is reached not through a sudden revelation, but through a patient, gentle, step-by-step conversation between Roland and his father outside the shop. It is one of the most moving passages in the novel.

Teachers are encouraged to read this chapter aloud rather than asking students to read independently, and to allow a period of quiet reflection before discussion. Some students may find this chapter particularly resonant. Have a calm, low-key support plan in place and be aware of any students who have recently experienced bereavement. Resources: Australian Childhood Foundation childhoodfoundation.org.au, Beyond Blue beyondblue.org.au.

About These Chapters

Chapters 18, 19, and 20 form the emotional and narrative climax of the novel's first arc. They are not adventure chapters - they are the chapters where the deepest work happens.

Chapter 18 ('Back at Home') returns Roland and Dad to Foglost Street, where the notes are still on the step and the stuck point is still waiting. Roland's dream - featuring The Great Miasma, Mum, and a pineapple - is a vivid piece of symbolic storytelling. His morning excitement, convinced the 'special meeting' means Mum is at the shop, builds almost unbearably before Dad accidentally deflates it with a single word: 'Veronica.'

Chapter 19 ('Unstuck') is the chapter the whole novel has been building toward. Roland's acceptance of Mum's death comes not as a dramatic breakdown but as a quiet, logical progression of questions and answers between father and son. The image of letting the stuck point 'drift away like a leaf on a pond' is one of the most beautiful in the book.

Chapter 20 ('Surprise!') returns to the mystery plot with Mrs Lester-Crabbe's reunion with the snowdomes - a scene of genuine joy and tenderness. Roland receives quiet recognition, and

the mystery remains open: how did the snowdomes end up in Yumpy? The two story threads - Roland's grief journey and the Yumpy investigation - converge beautifully here.

Before Reading: Preparing the Class

These prompts are designed to build emotional readiness before these chapters. Use your own judgement about timing - you may prefer to read first and discuss after.

Optional Pre-Reading Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever been completely convinced something was going to happen, and then it didn't? How did you feel in that moment?
- Think about something from earlier in the novel that you have been expecting or hoping would happen. What do you think will happen when Roland gets home?
- What does it mean to 'let go' of something? Is letting go the same as forgetting? Can you let go of something and still carry it with you?
- Roland has been described throughout the novel as someone who reasons carefully and logically. How might that way of thinking help or hinder him in coming to terms with grief?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapters 18, 19, and 20. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
muffled	Made quieter, softer, or less distinct, as if heard through a barrier.
cagey	Reluctant to give information; deliberately vague or secretive.
deduction	The process of reaching a conclusion by reasoning logically from facts.
frantic	Wildly or desperately excited or worried; in a state of panic.
rhythmic	Having a regular, repeated pattern; following a regular beat.
frenzy	A state of uncontrolled excitement, activity, or agitation.
pensive	Deeply thoughtful, often about something serious or sad.
development	A new event or piece of information that changes a situation.
lovingly	In a way that expresses deep affection and care.

chorus	A repeated section of a song; or, used figuratively, something that keeps coming back.
throbbing	A sensation of regular, pulsing pain or pressure; an ache with a rhythm.
crazed	Wildly out of control; showing signs of extreme agitation or madness.
recognition	Acknowledgement or appreciation of someone's achievement or value.
provenance	The origin or history of ownership of an object (revisited from earlier chapters).

Vocabulary and Language Activities

Activity 1 - The Language of Grief and Recovery

The author uses many figurative expressions to describe Roland's emotional experience across these three chapters. Complete the table below, explaining in your own words what each expression means, and what it tells us about how Roland is feeling.

Expression from the text	What it means and what it tells us
'Empty speech balloons... burst as they hit the ceiling. Plok. Plok. Plok.'	
'The silence stretched like elastic'	
'Like the tail end of something draining out of me, where most of it had gone already'	
'Let it drift away like a leaf on a pond'	
'The only throbbing was in my heart, in the space where Mum was'	

Activity 2 - Logical Sequencing: Roland's Questions

In Chapter 19, Roland reaches acceptance through a sequence of careful logical questions. Read the questions below and number them in the order Roland asks them. Then write one final question of your own that Roland could have asked next.

Roland's question	Order (1-4)
'And she didn't come back even when I left a note at the stuck point, did she?'	
'She's not coming back at all, is she Dad?'	
'And she didn't come back even when I went to the stuck point every day, did she?'	
'I've moved away from the stuck point, haven't I Dad?'	

My next question:

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Chapter 18: Back at Home - Literal Comprehension

1. When Roland and Dad arrive home, where are the notes they left before the holiday?
2. Describe Roland's dream. Who appears in it, and what happens?
3. Why does Roland race through breakfast and leap out of bed with such excitement the next morning?

4. What does Roland imagine might explain why Mum went to the shop instead of coming home?
5. What single word does Dad say that makes Roland's excitement instantly collapse?

Chapter 19: Unstuck - Literal Comprehension

6. Where is Roland when he and Dad have the conversation about the stuck point?
7. List the four questions Roland asks Dad, in order.
8. What is Dad's response to all four of Roland's questions?
9. How does Roland describe the crying that follows? How is it different from previous crying?
10. What image does Roland use when he asks about letting go of the stuck point?
11. What does Dad say will allow Roland to move away from the stuck point without moving away from Mum?

Chapter 20: Surprise! - Literal Comprehension

12. Who arrives at the shop, and what does Dad say is the reason for the meeting?
13. What are the two developments Dad mentions regarding the burglary?
14. Describe Mrs Lester-Crabbe's reaction when she opens the first box, and then the second.
15. What does Mrs Lester-Crabbe say to Roland when she thanks him?
16. What does Detective Champion say at the end of the chapter?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Roland's dream mixes images from the Yummy mystery (The Great Miasma, Myra Dempsey) with images of Mum. What does this dream suggest about how Roland's mind is processing everything that has happened?
2. Roland imagines increasingly elaborate explanations for why Mum went to the shop instead of home: a secret mission, fighting crime, being like Squidape. What do these fantasies reveal about Roland's state of mind, and why does the author choose to show them to us?
3. Dad says 'Veronica' - just one word - and 'the whole world stood still' for Roland. Why does this single word destroy all of Roland's hope?
4. Roland reaches acceptance through questions, not through being told. Why do you think this method - letting Roland work through it himself - is so important for him specifically?
5. Mrs Lester-Crabbe says: 'Some people see things as stuff or junk... but items like these have stories and meanings all their own.' How does this statement connect to the novel's broader themes of memory, value, and loss?

6. Danni Champion says 'case closed on finding the snowdomes... but case still very much open on how they ended up in Yumpy.' Why is it important narratively that the mystery is not fully resolved here?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. The image Roland uses for letting go - 'a leaf on a pond' - is quiet, natural, and gradual. Why is this a better image for what Roland needs to do than, say, 'letting go of a rope' or 'closing a door'? What does the leaf image suggest about how grief should be handled?
2. Dad tells Roland that moving away from the stuck point does not mean moving away from Mum - photos, stories, and memory will keep her alive. Do you agree that this is possible? Is it ever possible to truly hold onto someone you have lost, and if so, how?
3. Chapter 19 is titled 'Unstuck.' Given everything that word has meant in the novel, and all the ways Roland has been stuck, do you think this is the right title for this chapter? What else might it have been called?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

A Note to Teachers

These prompts invite personal reflection on themes of loss, memory, and moving forward. Consider offering an oral sharing circle before written responses. Remind students that they are always welcome to write about imagined scenarios rather than personal experience.

1. Roland uses logic - a sequence of questions - to reach acceptance. Think about a time you used reasoning and logic to work through something difficult or confusing. How did thinking it through step by step help you?
2. Dad says Roland can keep Mum alive through photos and stories. Think about someone - a person or a pet - who is no longer in your life. What is one memory or story that keeps them alive for you? Write about it.
3. The stuck point was a particular place - the bottom step - where Roland waited every day. If you had a 'stuck point' (a place or habit you returned to when you felt lost or unsure), where would it be, and why?
4. Mrs Lester-Crabbe says some people see things as 'stuff or junk' but others understand that objects carry stories and meanings. Think of one object in your home that has a story behind it. Write about the object and what makes it meaningful.

5. Roland has been on a very long journey from the bottom step to this moment outside the shop. In your own words, write a short summary of the most important steps in Roland's journey. What do you think has changed most about him by the end of Chapter 20?

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar. Create a safe, gentle environment before beginning.

Grief, Acceptance, and Moving Forward

- Roland reaches acceptance through his own questions rather than being told. Is it better to let someone arrive at a painful truth themselves, or is it kinder to tell them directly? Does it depend on the person?
- Roland says the crying in Chapter 19 felt like 'the tail end of something draining out.' What do you think this means? Why might acceptance feel like relief as much as sadness?
- Dad tells Roland that Mum will always be part of him, and they can keep her alive through stories and memories. Do you believe this is true? What role do stories play in keeping people alive after they are gone?

Hope, Disappointment, and the Mind's Defences

- Roland's mind constructs elaborate, hopeful explanations for why Mum might be at the shop - a secret mission, fighting crime. Why do our minds sometimes create stories to avoid a painful truth? Is this a failure of logic, or a form of self-protection?
- The word 'Veronica' destroys Roland's hope instantly because it names someone other than Mum. Have you ever had a moment where a single word or sentence changed everything you were feeling? What was it like?
- Chapter 18's dream mixes fantasy (The Great Miasma) with real people (Myra, Mum) and recurring symbols (the pineapple). What do you think dreams do - do they help us process things, or just confuse us? Do Roland's dreams in the novel seem to be helping him?

Stories, Objects, and What We Carry

- Mrs Lester-Crabbe says that objects carry stories and meanings. How does this idea connect to everything the snowdome has represented in the novel - for Mrs Lester-Crabbe, for Roland, and even for Smedley Smooth?
- Roland has been carrying Mum's list in his pocket throughout the holiday. He puts it on the window ledge of the hotel room. How is the list itself a kind of object that carries a story and meaning? What will happen to it now?

- Danni says the case is still open. We know roughly what happened in Yumpy, but we don't know why, and we don't know who instructed it. Who do you think is ultimately responsible, and what evidence do you have?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. Where are the notes Roland and Dad left for Mum when they arrive home?

- A They have been moved to the kitchen table
- B They are on the bottom step exactly where they were left
- C They are missing
- D Dad finds them in the letterbox

Answer: B

2. Who appears in Roland's dream alongside The Great Miasma?

- A Mrs Lester-Crabbe and Detective Champion
- B Myra Dempsey and Mum
- C Smedley Smooth and Helen
- D Leah and Layla

Answer: B

3. What single word does Dad say that causes Roland's excitement to collapse?

- A Shop
- B Sorry
- C Veronica
- D Later

Answer: C

4. What image does Roland use to describe letting go of the stuck point?

- A Closing a gate
- B Dropping a stone in water

- C A leaf drifting away on a pond
- D Turning off a light

Answer: C

5. How does Roland describe the crying in Chapter 19?

- A The same as the day in The Greasy Pig - wild and shaking
- B Like the tail end of something draining out, where most of it had gone already
- C Sudden and overwhelming, like a wave
- D Silent and invisible, hidden from Dad

Answer: B

6. What does Detective Champion say at the end of Chapter 20?

- A She will arrest Smedley Smooth immediately
- B The case is now fully closed
- C Finding the snowdomes closes that part of the case, but how they ended up in Yumpy is still open
- D Roland should be given an award for finding the snowdomes

Answer: C

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
Mum had read the notes and moved them to a different spot.	False
Roland believed the special meeting at the shop meant Mum was waiting there.	True
Roland concluded on his own, through a sequence of questions, that Mum was not coming back.	True
Dad told Roland directly that Mum had died, without waiting for Roland to ask.	False
Roland described the crying in Chapter 19 as the worst and most violent he had ever experienced.	False
Dad said moving away from the stuck point would mean forgetting Mum.	False
Mrs Lester-Crabbe wept when she saw the Coronation Snowdome returned to her.	True
Detective Champion said the entire case was now closed.	False

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. In your own words, explain what Dad means when he says Roland can keep Mum alive even after moving away from the stuck point.

2. What does Mrs Lester-Crabbe say to Roland when she thanks him for finding the snowdome?

3. Describe Roland's dream in Chapter 18. Who is in it, and what happens?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapters 18, 19, and 20 to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Figurative language of grief and recovery table; discussion of how the leaf metaphor is carefully chosen; logical sequencing activity.
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Discussion of the <i>Plok</i> onomatopoeia; how the four-question sequence in Chapter 19 builds through repetition; the structural use of single-word dialogue.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Analysis of 'Veronica' as a single word that collapses all hope; discussion of how the word 'chorus' is used figuratively.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Chapter-by-chapter literal comprehension questions; inferential questions on Roland's fantasies, Dad's single word, and the open mystery.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Evaluative comprehension; synthesising Roland's complete character arc; comparing earlier grief chapters with Chapters 18-20.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Discussion questions on acceptance, hope and disappointment, and stories and objects.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended tasks: Roland's journey summary; objects with stories; logic as a tool for difficult truths.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Analysis of how Roland's four-question method mirrors his neurodivergent thinking style; how the author makes acceptance feel earned rather than imposed.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Discussion of Chapter 19's structure as a literary set-piece; how the dream in Chapter 18 foreshadows and mirrors waking events; the dual-closure of Chapter 20.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on using logic to process difficulty, memory and objects, stuck points, and Roland's full journey.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

Chapter 19 as a Literary Set-Piece: Teaching the Technique

The conversation between Roland and Dad in Chapter 19 works through deliberate repetition: Roland asks a question, Dad confirms it, and the answers accumulate until only one final conclusion is possible. This is a profoundly respectful way to handle acceptance - it lets Roland reach the truth through his own reasoning rather than having it imposed on him. Teachers can use this passage to discuss structural technique: what effect does the repetition create? How does the rhythm of question-and-answer build emotional weight? Why is 'No, Roland, she didn't' more powerful than a single direct statement would be?

The Leaf on the Pond: Teaching Metaphor and Grief

Roland's image for letting go - a leaf drifting away on a pond - is a beautiful moment, and it comes from Roland himself. It is not Dad's metaphor: it is Roland's. This is significant. The author shows us that Roland, for all his difficulty with unstructured situations, is capable of finding language for his own inner experience. Teachers may wish to invite students to find their own metaphors for letting go of something difficult. This is both a literary exercise and a potentially meaningful wellbeing activity, and should be handled with care and sensitivity.

The Dual Closure of Chapter 20

Chapter 20 performs two kinds of closure simultaneously. For Roland's personal journey, it delivers warmth, recognition, and a quiet moment of having done something genuinely good for someone he loves. For the mystery plot, it closes the question of where the snowdomes are while explicitly leaving open the question of how and why. Danni's final lines ensure that readers understand the investigation is not over, even as Roland's grief arc reaches a resting point. This structural duality is worth discussing with students as an example of how novels can carry multiple stories at once.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
PDHPE - Mental Health and Wellbeing	Use Chapter 19 as a springboard for discussing grief as a normal human experience. What are healthy ways to process loss? What does it mean to 'accept' something without forgetting it? Connect to school wellbeing frameworks.
English - Poetry and Figurative Language	Ask students to write a short poem or extended metaphor for their own experience of letting go of something, using Roland's leaf image as a model. Focus on choosing a natural image that conveys gradual, gentle movement.
Visual Arts	Students illustrate a scene from Chapter 19 or 20 - Roland and Dad outside the shop, or Mrs Lester-Crabbe shaking the Coronation Snowdome. Focus on conveying emotion through facial expression, body language, and light.
HASS - Civics	Danni says the case is still open. Discuss what happens when stolen goods are recovered: who do they belong to? What is the role of police in returning property? What rights do victims have?

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Ask students to write a comparative essay (two to three paragraphs) contrasting Roland at the start of Chapter 5 (first sitting on the step) with Roland at the end of Chapter 20. Use specific textual evidence to show how he has changed, and what has driven each stage of the change.
Support	Provide a graphic summary of Roland's grief journey from Chapter 5 to Chapter 20 - a visual timeline with key moments - to help students locate these chapters within the whole arc. Offer sentence starters for comprehension and reflection tasks.
EAL/D	Pre-teach the concept of acceptance as a stage of grief using simple, concrete language. Provide a simplified version of Chapter 19's question-and-answer exchange. Allow additional reading time and verbal responses for all tasks.
Early Finishers	Write Mrs Lester-Crabbe's diary entry for the evening after Chapter 20. She has just been reunited with her snowdome. What is she feeling? What does she think of Roland? What does she hope will happen next in the investigation?

PART 12

Chapter 21: Roland Thinks Things Through

Chapter 22: Big Questions

Chapter 23: A Pattern of Thefts

About These Chapters

Chapters 21, 22, and 23 form the investigation planning sequence of the novel's third section. With Roland's personal grief arc now resolved, the story shifts its full weight onto the mystery - and these chapters show the investigation gathering real momentum.

Chapter 21 ('Roland Thinks Things Through') is a thinking chapter, showing Roland's mind at work through physical tools - maps, squares of paper, arrows, string - and eventually online research, which delivers the critical discovery: a photograph showing Daphne Crabbe and Smedley Smooth shaking hands over 'That Chair.'

Chapter 22 ('Big Questions') takes the investigation to the shop, an honest assessment, and a new Squidape comic about stolen pot plants that unlocks the final piece of Roland's thinking.

Chapter 23 ('A Pattern of Thefts') brings the collectors together, reveals that the thefts are wider than first suspected, and ends with the group agreeing on a plan: lay a trap.

Together these chapters demonstrate Roland's visual, systematic, connection-making mind at its best - and contain a genuine thriller's worth of plot development.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to prepare students for the investigation-planning themes of these chapters.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever tried to solve a puzzle or problem by physically laying things out - drawing a diagram, making a list, or using objects? Did it help?
- What is the difference between having a story that could explain something and having proof? Can you think of an example?
- If you were going to set a trap to catch a thief, what would you use as bait? How would you make sure you caught them in the act?
- Think about all the people connected to the mystery so far. Who do you think is the mastermind behind the thefts, and what is their motive?

- Roland uses Squidape comics to help him think about real situations. Can you think of a book, film, or story you have used in a similar way - as a model for thinking about something in real life?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapters 21, 22, and 23. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
engraved	Cut or carved into a surface to create a design or inscription.
monogram	A design made by combining the initials of a person's name.
coincidence	A remarkable occurrence of events at the same time, apparently by chance.
mastermind	The person who plans and directs a complex scheme or operation.
concealed	Hidden from view; kept out of sight.
anonymously	Without revealing who you are; without being identified.
cartel	A group of independent organisations that cooperate secretly to pursue shared illegal goals.
nefarious	Wicked and criminal (revisited from earlier chapters).
posse	A group of people working together, often for an unlawful purpose.
pungent	Having a strong, sharp smell that is often unpleasant.
offsider	An assistant or partner who helps someone, especially in a criminal context.
triumphant	Having achieved a great victory or success; feeling or showing great joy at a success.
tentacles	The long, flexible limbs of a squid or octopus; used here figuratively for diagram arrows going in many directions.
savagely	In a fierce, violent, or uncontrolled way.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - Detective Vocabulary: Proof vs. Theory

In Chapter 22, Dad says Roland has 'a good story' but not proof. These are two very different things in detective work. Complete the table below by sorting each item into the correct column.

Items to sort: a photograph of two people shaking hands, a hunch, a news article, an eyewitness account, a coincidence, a membership form with names on it, seeing boxes labelled with a company name, a signed confession.

Evidence / Proof	Story / Theory

Activity 2 - Comic Villain Names: Wordplay and Meaning

Chapter 22 introduces two new Squidape villains: Doug the Thug and his offsider Squish the Fish, plus Mrs Fyfe the Lowlyfe and her Pack of Youths. The author uses rhyme and wordplay to make these names memorable. Complete the table below.

Villain name	What rhymes or wordplay is used?	What does the name suggest?
Doug the Thug		
Squish the Fish		
Mrs Fyfe the Lowlyfe		
Pack of Youths		

Now invent one more rhyming villain name and write a two-sentence description of what they steal.

Name: _____

What they steal:

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Chapter 21: Roland Thinks Things Through - Literal Comprehension

1. How does Roland physically organise his thinking about the Yumpy puzzle? Describe the tools and methods he uses.
2. What does Roland add to his list after thinking about the two boats he saw from the headland?
3. What does Roland find when he searches for The Yumpy Improvement Society online?
4. What is in the photo Roland finds in the news search results, and why is it so significant?
5. What is the Wellington Kettle, and how did Smedley Smooth identify it as valuable?

Chapter 22: Big Questions - Literal Comprehension

6. What does Dad say Roland has, and what does he say Roland is still missing?
7. Describe the Squidape story about Doug the Thug and Squish the Fish.
8. What is the scheme in the Mrs Fyfe the Lowlyfe story, and how is the villain eventually caught?
9. What connection does Roland make between the Mrs Fyfe story and the Yumpy events?

Chapter 23: A Pattern of Thefts - Literal Comprehension

10. What does Mr Frogget report has happened to part of his collection? What was stolen?
11. Why does Mr Rumpy wonder how any burglar would even know what to target?
12. What is on Question 6 of the LIAR membership form, and why does this matter?
13. How does Roland connect the LIAR membership form to both the burglaries and to Yumpy?
14. What is the plan the group agrees on, and which two collectors will be used as bait?
15. What does Roland realise at the very end of Chapter 23, and which Squidape story does it remind him of?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Roland uses paper, string, and a map to organise his thinking. What does this physical, visual approach to problem-solving tell us about how Roland's mind works?
2. Roland says: 'What I didn't know was how each of them connected to the others.' This is an honest assessment of a gap in his thinking. Why is recognising what you don't know just as important as knowing what you do know?
3. Dad says Roland has 'a good story' but not proof. Why is this an important distinction? Can you think of real-world situations where a compelling story without proof has caused problems?
4. Mrs Fyfe the Lowlyfe's scheme works because stolen plants are sold back to the public - sometimes to their original owners. How does this mirror what seems to be happening with stolen collectables in Yumpy?
5. Miss Leadbetter chops the cake 'more savagely than she needed to' when Smedley Smooth's name is mentioned. What does this comic action tell us about how she feels?
6. Roland says at the end: 'all the pieces tumbled into place.' He does not tell us what the final realisation is. Why do you think the author withholds it? What effect does this create for the reader?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. Dad describes Roland's investigation as 'a good story.' In detective fiction, a good story is sometimes called a theory. What is the difference between a theory and proof? Do you think Roland's theory about Smedley Smooth is convincing? What additional evidence would make it more convincing?
2. The plan to 'stage a burglary' involves deliberately putting a valued item at risk to catch the criminals. Is this a reasonable plan? What are the ethical risks, and what could go wrong?
3. The Squidape comics have functioned throughout the novel as both entertainment and a thinking tool for Roland. In these chapters, two different comic stories help him crack two different parts of the mystery. Do you think the author is suggesting something about the value of fiction and reading? What might that be?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

1. Roland uses a map, paper squares, arrows, and string to organise his thinking visually. Design your own method for organising a complicated set of ideas or information. Describe or draw your system and explain why it would work for you.

2. The Wellington Kettle is 'a bit beaten up and scratched, and black on the bottom' - it looks like any old kettle. But Dad says 'it's the small details that can be the most important.' Think about a time when a small detail turned out to be very important. Describe what you noticed and what difference it made.
3. Mrs Fyfe the Lowlyfe steals pot plants and sells them back to the community - sometimes to their original owners. This is both funny and clever. Invent your own Squidape villain who uses an equally unexpected method to steal something equally unexpected. Describe their scheme and how Squidape catches them.
4. Roland opens the meeting of collectors by saying: 'It all started with a pineapple.' Write the opening two paragraphs of Roland's explanation to the collectors, in his own voice, starting with that line.
5. The group plans to lay a trap for the thieves by staging a burglary. Write a short scene showing the moment Miss Leadbetter or Mr Rumpy first agrees to take the risk and offer their prized item as bait. What are they thinking and feeling?

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar.

Thinking, Evidence, and Proof

- Dad says Roland has a story but not proof. What is the difference, and why does it matter? In what situations outside detective stories does this distinction become important - in science, in law, in everyday life?
- Roland recognises what he does not know as clearly as what he does know. Is this a skill? Is it something that comes naturally, or does it have to be learned?
- The photograph of Daphne Crabbe and Smedley Smooth is the first real piece of documentary evidence in the investigation. Why is a photograph more powerful as evidence than an observation or a theory?

Collaboration, Community, and the Collectors

- The collectors each bring something different to the investigation: Mr Frogget brings news of other thefts, Miss Leadbetter summarises the theory clearly, Mr Rumpy raises the question of how a burglar would know what to target, and Dad provides the LIAR membership form connection. How does collaboration produce better thinking than any one person working alone?

- Roland is a child who has led the investigation that these adults are now taking seriously. What does this tell us about expertise, passion, and the value of paying attention regardless of your age?
- The collectors are willing to put their prized items at risk to catch the thieves. What does this tell us about their sense of justice and community responsibility?

Fiction as a Thinking Tool

- Roland uses two Squidape comics in these chapters to unlock parts of the real mystery - the jewel-hiding scheme and the stolen-and-resold plants scheme. Is this realistic? Can fiction actually help us understand real problems?
- Mum said stories are like invisible glue. In these chapters, Roland uses stories - specifically comic book stories - as tools for pattern recognition and deduction. How is this an example of what Mum meant?
- The novel itself is a story about a boy solving a mystery with the help of other stories. What does this suggest about the relationship between reading widely and thinking deeply?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. What discovery does Roland make when he searches for news about Yumpy and The Itchy Fingers Emporium online?

- A He finds a police report about the burglaries
- B A photo of Daphne Crabbe and Smedley Smooth shaking hands over 'That Chair'
- C An article about Bill Turnip's fishing boat
- D A news story about the Coronation Snowdome being found

Answer: B

2. In the Squidape comic about Mrs Fyfe the Lowlyfe, what does she steal?

- A Jewels from a famous opera singer
- B Tennis balls from sports clubs
- C Pot plants from front gardens
- D Badge collections from collectors

Answer: C

3. What did the thieves do with the stolen pot plants in the Mrs Fyfe story?

- A They composted them
- B They sold them at a nursery called Wallflowers
- C They replanted them in their own garden
- D They used them to disguise their hideout

Answer: C

4. What question on the LIAR membership form does Dad identify as the key link?

- A Question 3: Address and home security details
- B Question 5: Estimated value of collection
- C Question 6: Collection Interests
- D Question 8: Known associates in the antiques world

Answer: C

5. Who are the two collectors chosen to be used as bait in the trap?

- A Mrs Lester-Crabbe and Mr Frogget
- B Miss Leadbetter and Mr Rumpy

- C Dad and Mrs Lester-Crabbe
- D Mr Frogget and Mr Rumpy

Answer: B

6. What does Roland realise at the very end of Chapter 23?

- A That the Wellington Kettle is also missing
- B That Arno Picken is the real mastermind
- C Something that makes all the pieces tumble into place - compared to Mrs Fyfe the Lowlyfe's scheme
- D That Detective Champion already knows everything

Answer: C

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
Roland used a map, paper squares, and string to organise his thinking visually.	True
The Yumpy Improvement Society website contained a lot of useful new information.	False
The Wellington Kettle was identified by a crown engraved on its base.	False
Dad told Roland he had proof that Smedley Smooth was behind the thefts.	False
Mr Frogget had a badge stolen that said PEACE but was misprinted as PIECE.	True
Miss Leadbetter got very calm and quiet when Smedley Smooth's name was mentioned.	False
Both Miss Leadbetter and Mr Rumpy were already members of LIAR.	False
Roland connects the Yumpy mystery to a Squidape story about stolen pot plants.	True

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. Explain why the photograph Roland finds online is so important to the investigation.

2. What is the plan the group agrees on to catch the thieves? Describe it in your own words.

3. What connection does Roland draw between the Mrs Fyfe the Lowlyfe story and the Yumpy operation?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapters 21, 22, and 23 to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Vocabulary activities; comic villain names and rhyming wordplay; discussion of how figurative language (tentacles as arrows) makes abstract thinking concrete.
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Proof vs. theory sorting activity; analysis of how Roland uses the knot metaphor to describe his tangled thinking; discussion of how 'Chop. Chop. Chop.' functions as comic punctuation.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Discussion of how villain names (Doug the Thug, Mrs Fyfe the Lowlyfe) create instant character through rhyme; analysis of the chapter title 'A Pattern of Thefts'.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Chapter-by-chapter literal comprehension; inferential questions on visual thinking, story vs. proof, and the withheld realisation.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Proof vs. theory sorting activity; evaluative comprehension; synthesising the full investigation arc across Chapters 12-23.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Discussion questions on evidence and proof, collaboration, and fiction as a thinking tool.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended tasks: Roland's opening speech to the collectors; inventing a Squidape villain; the trap scene from a collector's perspective.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Analysis of Roland's knot metaphor for tangled thinking; how Miss Leadbetter's cake-chopping reveals emotion without dialogue.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Discussion of the withheld realisation at the end of Chapter 23; how the Squidape stories are used as structural mirrors; the role of comedy in thriller pacing.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on visual thinking systems, small-detail observation, using fiction as a thinking tool, and collaborative problem-solving.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

Roland's Visual Thinking: A Model for the Classroom

Chapter 21 is a wonderful model for explicit teaching of visual thinking and organisational strategies. Roland uses a map, labelled paper squares, arrows, and string to externalise his thinking - making the invisible visible. This is not just a character quirk; it is a genuinely effective strategy for many learners. Teachers may wish to have students try their own version of Roland's corkboard for a topic they are studying, or to replicate his approach with the Yumpy investigation itself. This connects to broader learning strategies across the curriculum and is particularly valuable for students who struggle to organise complex information in linear text.

The Withheld Realisation: A Masterclass in Suspense

The final lines of Chapter 23 are a masterclass in narrative restraint. Roland has his final realisation - 'all the pieces tumbled into place' - but the author does not tell us what it is. This technique, withholding the resolution at precisely the moment it arrives, creates maximum suspense and practically forces the reader to turn the page. Teachers can use this moment to discuss how authors control the release of information, and to practise the technique in students' own writing. Challenge students to write a scene that ends at the moment of realisation, without stating what was realised.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
English - Information Literacy	Roland uses online search to find a critical piece of evidence. Discuss how to evaluate online sources: what makes a news article credible? What is the difference between a fact, an opinion, and a claim? How can you tell?
Mathematics - Data and Problem Solving	Roland's diagram is essentially a data visualisation - a network map showing connections between nodes. Discuss different ways of representing connected information: tables, Venn diagrams, mind maps, and network maps. Which works best for which type of problem?
HASS - Civics and Law	The group plans to deliberately stage a situation to catch a criminal. Discuss the ethics and legality of entrapment. Is it ever okay to manufacture a crime to catch someone? How do police use controlled operations?
English - Oral Language	Roland delivers a presentation to the collectors using a corkboard diagram. Students plan and deliver a short oral investigation report to the class, using a visual aid (a map, diagram, or series of images) to support their presentation.

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Students recreate Roland's full corkboard diagram - with all seven items on the list, the committee members, the LIAR connection, and the Smedley Smooth link - using paper, string, and their own annotations. They then present it to a partner or the class, explaining each connection.
Support	Provide a partially completed version of Roland's diagram with the key elements labelled and two or three connections already drawn, so students can focus on understanding the connections rather than constructing the diagram from scratch.
EAL/D	Pre-teach 'theory' and 'evidence' using simple, concrete examples (e.g. the dog ate the homework - what is theory? what is evidence?). Provide a vocabulary scaffold for the proof-vs-theory sorting activity. Allow additional reading time.
Early Finishers	Write the scene Roland imagines but the author withholds - the final realisation at the end of Chapter 23. What exactly did Roland work out? Write the paragraph that should follow 'all the pieces tumbled into place,' in Roland's voice.

PART 13

Chapter 24: Danni Champion

About This Chapter

Chapter 24 contains three distinct movements, each advancing the plan toward its climax. In the first movement, Roland delivers his complete theory to Danni Champion, presenting his pinboard diagram and walking through the full chain of events from Smedley Smooth's LIAR membership access through to Daphne Crabbe and The Itchy Fingers Emporium. In the second, the bait has been taken: both Miss Leadbetter's Paradise Birdcage and Mr Rumpy's Uranium Cranium have been stolen. In the third, Dad orchestrates Stage Two - assigning surveillance roles to each collector and booking rooms in Yumpy - before Roland almost derails everything by skipping his morning routine in his excitement.

The chapter is rich in humour (the birdcage, the poo, the Monopoly card), genuine tension (Roland's freeze at the end), and plot momentum. It also delivers one of the novel's structural moments: the full theory, stated clearly and confidently by Roland, in front of a police detective.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to prepare students for this action-packed chapter.

Discussion Prompts

- If you had to explain a complicated theory to someone in authority - like a detective or a teacher - how would you organise your explanation? What would you start with?
- Have you ever used something unusual as bait or a lure to get a result? What was it, and did it work?
- What makes an object 'priceless'? Can something be valuable even if it has no monetary worth?
- Think about the role each collector has played in the story. What unique quality does each one bring to the group?
- Roland has struggled throughout the novel with excitement causing him to break his routine. Do you think he will be able to manage this during Stage Two of the plan? What do you predict?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapter 24. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
riveted	Completely fixed in place or attention; unable to look away.
audible	Loud enough to be heard (revisited from earlier chapters).
flourish	A bold, sweeping gesture or action done for dramatic effect.
afoot	In progress; happening or being planned - from the phrase 'the game is afoot.'
stake-out	A period of secret surveillance, watching a place to catch a criminal.
muffled	Quietened or made less distinct, as if heard through a barrier.
extinct	No longer existing; having died out completely as a species.
priceless	Too valuable to be given a price; of incalculable worth.
culprit	The person responsible for a crime or wrongdoing.
superiors	People of higher rank or authority, especially in a professional context.
surveillance	Close observation of a person or place, especially by police.
ajar	Slightly open; not fully closed.
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid; the molecule carrying genetic information unique to each individual.
accommodation	A place to stay, such as a hotel room or other lodging.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - Idioms and Expressions

Chapter 24 contains several idioms and expressions that carry specific meanings. Match each expression to its meaning.

Expression	What it means
'The game is afoot'	
'Ran like a well-oiled machine'	

'Without a hitch'	
'Second prize in a beauty contest' (Monopoly card)	
'Lay a trap'	

Now choose one expression and use it in a sentence of your own.

Activity 2 - The Paradise Birdcage: Extraordinary Provenance

Miss Leadbetter's birdcage has extraordinary provenance - it connects to Charles Darwin, a Paradise Parrot, and a family history spanning generations. Using the information in the chapter, complete the timeline below.

Who / When	What happened
Charles Darwin	
Darwin's correspondent (Miss Leadbetter's great-great-grandfather)	
Miss Leadbetter's great-grandfather	
The Paradise Parrot	
Miss Leadbetter today	

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Literal Comprehension: Roland's Theory (First Movement)

1. How does Roland present his theory to Danni? What does he use, and how does he organise it?
2. According to Roland's theory, what is Smedley Smooth's specific role in the operation?
3. How does Roland explain Bill Turnip's role? What is the significance of the flashing light?
4. Explain the role of Arno Picken and Myra Dempsey in Roland's theory of how stolen goods are moved.
5. What does Dad suggest about how 'That Chair' fits into the story? Was it part of the original plan?

Literal Comprehension: The Bait Is Taken (Second Movement)

6. What happened to Miss Leadbetter's Paradise Birdcage? Describe what she came home to find.
7. Why is the Paradise Birdcage significant? List at least three reasons it is considered valuable or unique.
8. What happened to Mr Rumpy's Uranium Cranium? How had he made it easy to steal?

Literal Comprehension: Stage Two (Third Movement)

9. What surveillance task does Dad assign to each of the following: Mrs Lester-Crabbe, Mr Frogget, Miss Leadbetter, and Mr Rumpy?
10. What happens to Roland at the end of the chapter when he is packing his bag?
11. What does Dad say to help Roland recover and get back on track?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Roland says his heart was beating too fast and his voice was squeaking as he presented to Danni. Despite this, he kept going. What does this tell us about the difference between feeling nervous and acting bravely?
2. Roland uses the image of The Great Miasma's pineapple to explain how the operation works - things that 'don't look out of place, but which are not really what they appear to be.' Why is this a particularly apt comparison for the Yumpy operation?

3. Dad says 'That Chair' was probably a genuine fluke, and that everything since has been 'stolen to order.' What does 'stolen to order' mean, and what does it tell us about how the operation evolved?
4. Roland wonders whether he should get Dad a magnifying glass for his birthday. What does this tell us about how Roland now sees his father - and how their relationship has changed?
5. Roland freezes at the end of the chapter because he has skipped his routine in his excitement. Dad brings him back gently with: 'Just come downstairs and have breakfast.' Why is this echo of earlier scenes in the novel so significant?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. Miss Leadbetter chose her Paradise Birdcage as bait, knowing she might lose it entirely. The birdcage has huge personal and scientific value. Do you think this was a brave choice, a reckless one, or both? What would you have done in her position?
2. Roland's full theory - delivered to a police detective - is the moment his investigation formally enters the world of professional law enforcement. Do you think children should be involved in real police investigations? What are the arguments for and against?
3. The chapter ends with Roland freezing again - the same physical response that has appeared throughout the novel. But this time, Dad's response is calm and practised, and Roland recovers quickly with the thought: 'I could start from now.' What does this tell us about how far both Roland and Dad have come?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

1. Roland uses his pinboard, list, and arrows to present his theory to Danni. Imagine you are Roland. Write a short version of your opening statement - how would you begin explaining the Yumpy operation to a detective? What would you say first, and why?
2. Miss Leadbetter's birdcage has what the antiques business calls extraordinary 'provenance' - it connects to Charles Darwin, an extinct parrot, and multiple generations of her family. Think of an object you own or know about that has a remarkable history. Write about the object and the chain of people and events that brought it to where it is today.
3. Each collector is given a specific surveillance role suited to what they know or where they are. Think about the members of your own class or family. If you had to assign surveillance tasks for an investigation, what role would suit each person, and why?

4. Roland compares the Yumpy operation to The Great Miasma's pineapple trick: things that look normal but are not what they appear. Think of another real-world example - from history, from news, or from your own experience - of something that appeared innocent but turned out to be something else entirely.
5. Dad handles Roland's freeze at the end of the chapter with quiet confidence. Write a short scene from Dad's perspective in that moment: what is he thinking and feeling as he watches Roland freeze, and what makes him respond the way he does?

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar.

Presenting, Persuading, and Being Heard

- Roland is nervous but keeps going, using his diagram and list to structure his presentation. What strategies did he use that made his presentation effective? What could you learn from his approach?
- Danni says the theory is solid but there is still no proof. If you were Danni, would you be convinced? What single additional piece of evidence would you most want?
- Roland is a child presenting to adults, including a police officer. Does age affect how seriously we should take someone's ideas or evidence? Should it?

Value, Risk, and Sacrifice

- Miss Leadbetter chose her birdcage - not just any item - as bait. It has family history, scientific significance, and even extinct bird DNA. What does her willingness to risk this tell us about her values?
- Is there anything you own or treasure so much that you would never use it as bait, no matter the cause? What makes something irreplaceable?
- Mr Rumpy left his Uranium Cranium on the kitchen table in full view, making it easy to steal. Is this a courageous act, a foolish one, or something in between? What does it tell us about his character?

Routine, Growth, and 'Starting from Now'

- Roland freezes at the end of the chapter - but recovers far more quickly than in earlier episodes. He thinks: 'I could start from now.' What does this phrase mean, and why is it significant for Roland's character arc?

- Dad's response to Roland's freeze in this chapter is calm and confident, not panicked. Compare this to how Dad responded to Roland's early crises in the novel. How has Dad changed as a parent?
- The phrase 'I could start from now' is a kind of life philosophy as much as a coping strategy. What do you think it means in a broader sense? Can you apply it to your own life?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. According to Roland's theory, what is Smedley Smooth's specific role in the operation?

- A He steals the items himself
- B He provides the committee with information from LIAR membership forms about collectors and their collections
- C He runs The Itchy Fingers Emporium
- D He owns the fishing boat used to transport the goods

Answer: B

2. What is the significance of the flashing light in the church tower, according to Roland?

- A It signals to Bill Turnip when it is safe to unload
- B It is a warning to the village of incoming weather
- C It guides the postal van to the correct delivery address
- D It is a signal from Smedley Smooth's yacht

Answer: A

3. What is special about the Paradise Birdcage? (Choose the best answer)

- A It is made of solid gold and worth millions
- B It is made from Charles Darwin's paperclips, belonged to an extinct parrot, and contains DNA in the poo tray
- C It was given to Miss Leadbetter's family by Queen Victoria
- D It is the only birdcage in the world that glows in ultraviolet light

Answer: B

4. What is Mr Rumpy's surveillance assignment?

- A Watch the pier and the beach
- B Keep an eye on the postal van at Boring
- C Keep a close watch on The Itchy Fingers Emporium
- D Stay with Daphne Crabbe at Yumpy

Answer: C

5. What does Dad say triggered the escalation from a genuine fluke to a systematic theft operation?

- A Smedley finding the Coronation Snowdome at the Emporium
- B Smedley spotting 'That Chair' and realising how valuable it was

- C Daphne Crabbe's idea to use the Emporium for fundraising
- D Roland discovering the cave full of boxes

Answer: B

6. How does Roland recover at the end of the chapter after freezing?

- A He calls Mrs Lester-Crabbe for comfort

- B He goes back to bed and starts the morning again
- C Dad holds him still and tells him to go downstairs for breakfast first
- D He reads a Squidape comic until he calms down

Answer: C

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
Roland's heart was beating fast and his voice was squeaking as he presented his theory.	True
Dad believes 'That Chair' was always part of the original theft plan.	False
Danni said Roland's theory was solid proof and she could take it to her superiors immediately.	False
Miss Leadbetter's birdcage is made from paperclips that belonged to Charles Darwin.	True
The Paradise Parrot is currently an endangered species.	False
Mr Rumpy left the Uranium Cranium locked in a safe to make it harder to steal.	False
Mrs Lester-Crabbe's job in Stage Two is to keep an eye on Daphne Crabbe in Yumpy.	True
Roland managed to pack his bag and leave without any disruption to his routine.	False

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. Explain Roland's theory about how stolen goods move from the burglar to The Itchy Fingers Emporium. Describe each step of the chain.

2. Why does Miss Leadbetter say the poo tray of the birdcage is important? What makes it scientifically significant?

3. What does Roland think when he recovers from his freeze at the end of the chapter? What three words capture his new approach?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapter 24 to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Idioms and expressions activity; vocabulary table; discussion of how 'the game is afoot' functions as a classic detective genre signal.
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Analysis of how Roland structures his presentation using sequence ('first... then... next...'); discussion of how the pineapple comparison illuminates the scheme's logic.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Discussion of how 'stolen to order,' 'well-oiled machine,' and 'without a hitch' function idiomatically; Paradise Birdcage provenance timeline activity.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Three-movement literal comprehension questions; inferential questions on nervousness and bravery, Dad's magnifying glass comment, and the routine echo.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Evaluative comprehension; comparing Roland's early crises with his recovery in this chapter; synthesising the full theory from Chapters 21-24.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Discussion questions on presenting under pressure, value and sacrifice, and the 'start from now' philosophy.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended tasks: Roland's opening statement; object provenance narrative; Dad's perspective during the freeze; surveillance role assignment.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Analysis of how Roland's squeaking voice and racing heart coexist with his clear, methodical presentation; how Dad's calm response reflects his growth as a parent.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Discussion of the three-movement structure of Chapter 24; how the final freeze mirrors earlier episodes while showing clear progress; the echoing of early chapters.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on nervous presenting, irreplaceable objects, surveillance roles, and the meaning of 'starting from now.'

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

Roland's Presentation: A Model for Oral Language

Roland's presentation to Danni Champion is one of the novel's examples of purposeful oral communication. He uses a visual aid (the pinboard diagram), a logical sequence (Smooth to committee to Bill to cave to tunnel to van to Emporium), and specific evidence (the photograph, the membership form, the snowdome) to build his argument. This is an excellent model for students' own oral presentation work. Teachers can ask students to reconstruct Roland's presentation using the novel as a source, or to deliver their own version of the theory to the class using a hand-drawn diagram.

The Paradise Birdcage: A Science-History Connection

The Paradise Birdcage connects Charles Darwin (a real historical figure, foundational to evolutionary science), the Paradise Parrot (a real extinct Australian bird, last confirmed sighting 1927), and the concept of ancient DNA (a real area of modern science). Teachers may wish to use the birdcage as a springboard for cross-curricular exploration: who was Darwin? Why did the Paradise Parrot go extinct? What can scientists learn from preserved biological material? This is also an opportunity to discuss what makes something 'priceless' - the intersection of scientific rarity, historical significance, and personal meaning.

'I Could Start from Now': Roland's Emerging Philosophy

The phrase 'I could start from now' represents Roland's internalisation of everything he has learned about flexibility, recovery, and moving forward. He does not think 'I have ruined the list' or 'I am stuck again.' He thinks: I can begin from this point. This is a profound and practical insight that extends well beyond routine management - it is a philosophy of resilience applicable to any setback. Teachers may wish to write it on the board and invite students to discuss what it means in their own lives, separate from the novel entirely.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
Science - Biology / Evolution	Research Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution by natural selection. What is the Paradise Parrot, and why did it go extinct? What is ancient DNA, and what can it tell scientists today?
English - Oral Language / Presentation	Students plan and deliver a short oral presentation to the class on a topic of their choice, using a visual aid. Model the structure Roland uses: clear sequence, visual support, specific evidence, and a confident opening statement.
HASS - History	Research Charles Darwin's voyage on the Beagle and how it contributed to his theory of evolution. Connect to Australian natural history: which other Australian animals have become extinct since European settlement?
PDHPE - Resilience	Discuss the phrase 'I could start from now' as a resilience strategy. What does it mean to recover from a setback without dwelling on it? How can we apply this thinking to disappointments, mistakes, or unexpected changes in our own lives?

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Students write a formal police briefing document in the style Danni Champion might write, summarising Roland's theory in bullet-point form for her superiors. Include: the alleged crime, suspected perpetrators, method of operation, evidence gathered, and recommended next steps.
Support	Provide a flowchart template showing the chain from Smedley Smooth to The Itchy Fingers Emporium, with blank boxes for students to fill in each link. This helps students visualise the chain before answering comprehension questions about it.
EAL/D	Pre-teach 'surveillance,' 'stake-out,' and 'extinct' using images and simple definitions. Discuss the concept of a police informant and what it means to 'go undercover.' Allow additional reading time and verbal responses.
Early Finishers	Write the scene from Danni Champion's perspective as she listens to Roland's presentation. What is she thinking? What impresses her? What gaps can she see in the theory? What does she decide to do next?

PART 14

Chapter 25: Goings-On

Chapter 26: The Party

About These Chapters

Chapters 25 and 26 are packed with tension, humour, deception, and genuine detective work, and they deliver on almost every promise the novel has made.

Chapter 25 ('Goings-On') covers the surveillance operation in full: Mrs Lester-Crabbe photographs Bill Turnip at Boring, Mr Rumpy reports from inside The Itchy Fingers Emporium, and Roland and Dad watch from the pier as the Spud arrives and Bill unloads boxes into the cave. The night's events confirm Roland's theory in every particular. The chapter ends on a perfectly placed note of suspense: Arno Picken is nowhere to be seen.

Chapter 26 ('The Party') takes the investigation into enemy territory. Roland and Dad attend Smedley Smooth's party, where Mrs Lester-Crabbe works Smedley with admirable skill, extracting a near-confession that he considers himself an 'expert advisor' to the Emporium and expects good finds 'with astonishing regularity.' The peacock-green flash identifies Daphne Crabbe as the tower signaller. And Danni, in the churchyard, gives Roland the moment he has been waiting for: 'Okay, Squidape.'

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to prepare students for these action-filled chapters.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever had to wait a long time for something exciting to happen, and had to stay very still and quiet? Describe the experience.
- In detective stories, operatives sometimes go undercover - pretending to be someone they are not to gather information. Is this ever justified? What are the risks?
- Dad tells Arno that Danni collects dentures. Why might it be important to have a cover story when you are on a surveillance operation?
- Think about all the characters we know in Yumpy. Which ones do you think know exactly what is happening, and which ones might be innocent?
- Roland has wanted to be like Squidape from the very first chapter. What do you think he will need to do in these chapters to fulfil that wish?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapters 25 and 26. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
furtively	In a way that is secretive and evasive, suggesting hidden or guilty activity.
sullen	Bad-tempered and silent; resentful and gloomy.
sleuthing	Investigating or detective work; acting as a sleuth (another word for detective).
trinket	A small item of little value; a cheap ornament or jewellery piece.
ornamental	Serving only for decoration; having no practical purpose - used here ironically by Smedley.
regularity	The quality of happening repeatedly and consistently; a regular pattern.
advisor	A person who gives advice or recommendations, especially in a professional context.
bollard	A short, thick post on a dock or pier to which ropes can be tied.
serviette	A paper or cloth napkin used at a meal; a table napkin.
refocussed	Adjusted to get a clearer image; directed attention back to something.
hoist	To lift or raise something, especially using ropes or a crane.
astonishing	Extremely surprising or impressive; causing amazement.
pivotal	Of crucial importance; at the centre of a turning point.
operative	A person who carries out covert or secret activities on behalf of an organisation.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - Cover Stories

Dad invents a cover story for Danni, claiming she collects dentures. He makes up specific details to make it convincing: Egyptian pharaoh teeth, a wooden tooth from the King of Norway. This is called improvised fiction in service of a plan.

Choose another character from the novel and invent a convincing cover story for them - what they collect, a few specific details. Try to make it as believable as possible while still being funny.

Character: _____

Cover story:

Activity 2 - Adverbs of Suspicious Behaviour

Several adverbs in this chapter describe how characters move or behave when they are up to something. Complete the table.

Adverb	What it suggests about the character's state of mind
furtively	
nervously	
sullen (adjective used as description)	
breathlessly	

Now write two sentences using different adverbs from the list above to describe a suspicious-looking character in a story of your own.

1. _____

2. _____

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Chapter 25: Goings-On - Literal Comprehension

1. What cover story does Dad invent for Danni when Arno asks what she collects?
2. Describe what Mrs Lester-Crabbe observes at Boring and reports to Dad via text. What does she photograph?
3. What does Mr Rumpy observe at The Itchy Fingers Emporium? Who is there, and what are they doing?
4. How does Mrs Lester-Crabbe get herself and Roland and Dad invited to Smedley Smooth's party?
5. Describe what happens at the pier and the beach as Roland and Dad watch that night. What does Bill Turnip do with the boxes?
6. What surprising detail do Roland and Dad notice when they return to The Greasy Pig?

Chapter 26: The Party - Literal Comprehension

7. How does Mrs Lester-Crabbe handle Smedley Smooth at the party? What does she say to get him talking?
8. What does Smedley say about his role with The Yumpy Improvement Society? What phrase does he use?
9. What clue does Roland see that identifies the person who signalled from the church tower?
10. What does Danni say to Roland when she sends him to hide in the churchyard? What does she call him?
11. What does Roland see when the shadowy figure leaves the tower? How does he confirm who it was?
12. What reason does Danni suggest for why Daphne Crabbe might be involved?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Dad's cover story for Danni - complete with teeth from an Egyptian pharaoh and a wooden tooth from the King of Norway - is absurd, but convincing in its detail. What does this tell us about Dad's quick thinking and sense of humour under pressure?
2. Smedley tells Mrs Lester-Crabbe he is 'purely ornamental' and a 'mere volunteer,' yet he also says he gets called on 'with astonishing regularity.' What does this contradiction reveal about Smedley?

3. Mrs Lester-Crabbe tells Smedley she loves uranium glass and would be grateful if he could find something special for her collection. Why is this clever? What is she trying to do?
4. Roland watches Bill Turnip go back and forth with fish crates and then boxes, at night, in the dark. He says 'the suspense was unbearable.' What is it about the waiting - rather than the action - that creates the most tension in these chapters?
5. Danni calls Roland 'Squidape' when she sends him into the churchyard. Why is this so meaningful for Roland - and for the reader?
6. The chapter ends with Arno Picken gone from the bar. How does this detail change the mood of what had been a triumphant night?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. Danni offers three possible reasons for Daphne Crabbe's involvement: greed, justification for a good cause, or not knowing what has been stolen until it appears. Which do you find most convincing, and why? Are any of these reasons also excuses?
2. Mrs Lester-Crabbe's role at the party is crucial - she extracts key information from Smedley while keeping him entirely charmed. Is this deceptive? Is deception ever justified when it serves justice?
3. Roland has been building toward a moment of being Squidape since Chapter 4. Danni calling him 'Squidape' in Chapter 26 is the fulfilment of that arc. Does Roland's behaviour in the churchyard - small, fast, brave, observant - match the qualities of Squidape as he described them? Use evidence from both the chapter and earlier in the novel.

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

1. Dad invents a cover story about dentures with some specific detail. Write your own invented cover story for a character in the novel - or for yourself - going undercover at the party. Include at least three convincing made-up details.
2. Roland hides in the churchyard, barely breathing, watching the tower door. Write a short description of those minutes from inside Roland's head - what does he see, hear, smell, and feel while he waits?
3. Mrs Lester-Crabbe handles Smedley Smooth with great skill at the party. She flatters him, asks leading questions, and gets him to say things he probably should not. Write a short scene in which another character from the novel (Dad, Roland, or Mr Frogget) attempts the same technique with Smedley - but with less success.
4. Danni says Daphne might not even know what has been stolen until it appears in the shop. Is it possible to be guilty of a crime without fully understanding what you are involved in? Write your own view on this question.
5. The chapter ends with Arno missing from the bar. Write the scene from Arno's perspective: where has he been, and is he starting to suspect that something is wrong?

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar.

Surveillance, Deception, and the Ethics of Investigation

- The group uses deception throughout these chapters - cover stories, undercover attendance at a party, hiding in bushes. Is this ethical? Does the end (catching the criminals) justify the means (the deception)?
- Mrs Lester-Crabbe uses flattery to extract information from Smedley. She tells him what he wants to hear. Is this different from lying? What is the relationship between flattery and manipulation?
- Danni is a police officer who is participating in an investigation. What clues are there that she has already involved her superiors?

Guilt, Motive, and Moral Complexity

- Daphne Crabbe runs the Yumpy Improvement Society - an organisation that has done real good for the village. Do you think she is a villain? Is it possible to be a person who does good things and still commit crimes?
- Smedley Smooth says he is 'purely ornamental' - just an advisor - but clearly knows exactly what is going on and benefits from it. Is he less guilty than the others because he does not physically steal anything?
- Bill Turnip has been kind and friendly to Roland throughout the novel. He let Roland board his boat and showed him the fish. Does this change how we feel about his involvement in the crime?

Roland as Squidape: The Moment Arrives

- Danni calls Roland 'Squidape' before sending him into the churchyard. What does this name mean in this moment, and why is it so powerful after everything Roland has been through?
- Roland is described as 'small and fast' - exactly the qualities needed for this particular task. Does being a hero require extraordinary abilities, or does it mean using what you have, when it is needed?
- Jim Bottle told Roland in Chapter 4 that if he acted like Squidape, others would see Squidape in him. Has this come true? Who else in the novel has seen Squidape in Roland, and when?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. What cover story does Dad invent for Danni when Arno asks what she collects?

- A Old coins and medals
- B Dentures and false teeth, including Egyptian pharaoh teeth and a Norwegian king's wooden tooth
- C Antique music boxes and gramophones
- D Pressed flowers and botanical samples

Answer: B

2. What does Mrs Lester-Crabbe photograph at Boring?

- A Daphne Crabbe meeting with Smedley Smooth
- B Bill Turnip, the Spud, a blue van, and boxes labelled A-1 Double Plus Company
- C The inside of the cave
- D The church tower with the flashing light

Answer: B

3. How does Roland and Dad's invitation to Smedley Smooth's party come about?

- A Danni arranges it as part of the official investigation
- B Dad calls Smedley directly and asks to be invited
- C Mrs Lester-Crabbe gets an invitation via her brother and manages to get one for Roland and Dad too
- D Mr Rumpy gives them his invitation

Answer: C

4. What clue identifies the person in the church tower as Daphne Crabbe?

- A Roland recognises her voice calling out inside the tower
- B Roland sees a moonlit flash of peacock green as she passes his hiding place
- C Dad recognises her car parked outside the church
- D Mr Frogget texts to say he saw her entering the church

Answer: B

5. What does Smedley say about his role with the Yumpy Improvement Society?

- A He is the founding member and main organiser
- B He is merely an expert advisor - purely ornamental - who gets called on with astonishing regularity
- C He has no connection to it and barely knows Daphne Crabbe
- D He finances the whole operation through his gallery Slick

Answer: B

6. What does Roland and Dad notice when they return to The Greasy Pig at the end of Chapter 25?

- A The boxes from the cave have been moved into the pub cellar
- B The front door is locked and the lights are off
- C A complete stranger is looking after the bar and Arno Picken is nowhere to be seen
- D Danni's room has been searched

Answer: C

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
Danni's cover story was that she collected antique spoons.	False
Mrs Lester-Crabbe took photographs of Bill Turnip loading boxes onto the Spud.	True
Mr Rumpy observed that Daphne Crabbe was absent from The Itchy Fingers Emporium.	False
Smedley Smooth claimed to have no involvement with the Yumpy Improvement Society at all.	False
Mrs Lester-Crabbe told Smedley about her snowdome collection at the party.	False
Roland clearly saw Daphne Crabbe's face in the churchyard.	False
Danni called Roland 'Squidape' before sending him to hide in the churchyard.	True
Arno Picken was behind the bar when Roland and Dad returned to The Greasy Pig.	False

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. What does Smedley Smooth say that amounts to a near-confession of his involvement in the operation? Quote or closely paraphrase his words.

2. Describe in your own words what Bill Turnip does with the boxes when he returns from delivering fish to Numpties.

3. What three reasons does Danni suggest for why Daphne Crabbe might be involved in the operation?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapters 25 and 26 to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Vocabulary activities; adverbs of suspicious behaviour table; discussion of how Smedley's self-contradicting language reveals guilt.
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Cover story activity; analysis of how Mrs Lester-Crabbe's flattery functions as a linguistic trap; discussion of how Smedley's drawn vowels contrast with Roland's plain speech.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Discussion of 'purely ornamental' and 'astonishing regularity' as self-betraying word choices; the significance of the single name 'Squidape' as a moment of recognition.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Chapter-by-chapter literal comprehension; inferential questions on Dad's cover story, Smedley's self-contradiction, waiting as tension, and the Squidape moment.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Evaluative comprehension; synthesising the full surveillance operation and the party; comparing the investigation team's methods across all chapters.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Discussion questions on surveillance ethics, guilt and motive, and Roland as Squidape.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended tasks: cover story invention; Roland in the churchyard (sensory writing); Arno's perspective; flattery-as-trap scene.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Analysis of how Mrs Lester-Crabbe's dialogue extracts information; how Smedley's self-description inadvertently reveals his guilt; how 'Okay, Squidape' fulfils the novel's central promise.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Discussion of the chapter's suspense mechanics (waiting, binoculars, buzzing phone, darkness); the peacock green flash as a precision detail; the final line's tonal shift.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on waiting under pressure, surveillance ethics, guilty by degree, and becoming who you aspire to be.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

'Okay, Squidape': The Payoff of the Novel's Central Promise

From Chapter 4, when Jim Bottle told Roland that if he acted like Squidape, others would see Squidape in him, the novel has been building to a moment of recognition. That moment arrives in Chapter 26 when Danni Champion - a professional police detective - looks at Roland and says: 'Okay, Squidape. You're small and you're fast.' This is the fulfilment of everything Jim promised. Teachers may wish to pause here and ask students to trace the arc explicitly: when did others first begin to see Squidape in Roland? (Chapter 9, when he takes Mrs Lester-Crabbe's hand; Chapter 12, when he spots the snowdome; Chapter 24, when he presents to Danni.) This is a rich opportunity for whole-novel reflection and character arc analysis.

The Mechanics of Suspense: How the Author Builds Tension

The pier and beach sequence in Chapter 25 is an example of building tension through delay. Roland and Dad wait for ten minutes - nothing. Fifteen minutes - nothing. The boat seems to have vanished. Then it is found again, but nothing happens. Then the tower light flashes and they scramble. The author deliberately frustrates expectation before delivering, making the eventual confirmation feel genuinely earned. Teachers can use this passage to discuss how writers build suspense: through waiting, through near-misses, through the physicality of discomfort (stiff legs, hard ground), and through withholding the key event until the last possible moment. Challenge students to write their own waiting scene using these techniques.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
English - Persuasive Language	Mrs Lester-Crabbe uses flattery, leading questions, and strategic self-presentation to extract information from Smedley. Students identify each technique she uses and discuss why each is effective. Connect to the study of persuasive language and rhetorical devices.
Drama	Students role-play the party scene, with one student as Smedley Smooth and another as Mrs Lester-Crabbe. Focus on status, subtext, and the gap between what characters say and what they mean. Debrief: what did the Mrs Lester-Crabbe character give away? What did they learn?
HASS - Civics / Law	Discuss what evidence has now been gathered and whether it is sufficient for police action. What is the legal threshold for an arrest? What is the difference between suspicion, evidence, and proof beyond reasonable doubt?
English - Thriller Genre Study	Students compare the pier-waiting scene with a waiting scene from another thriller novel or film. What techniques do both use? Is waiting more tense than action? Discuss the role of pacing in thriller narratives.

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Students write a 'case summary' document from Danni Champion's perspective, covering all the evidence gathered in Chapters 25 and 26. Present it as a formal police document: date, location, operatives involved, observations made, and recommended next steps.
Support	Provide a timeline of the night's events (arrival in Yumpy, Mrs Lester-Crabbe's texts, Mr Rumpy's call, party, church tower, pier) for students to annotate rather than reconstruct from scratch. This helps students grasp the sequence before answering comprehension questions.
EAL/D	Pre-teach 'furtively,' 'stake-out,' and 'surveillance' with images and simple definitions. Discuss the concept of an alibi - why Daphne would want to appear to have stayed at the party. Allow additional reading time and verbal responses.
Early Finishers	Write the scene from Smedley Smooth's perspective later that night, after Mrs Lester-Crabbe has gone. He is reviewing the conversation in his mind. What does he think she knows? Is he worried? Does he suspect anything is wrong?

PART 15

Chapter 27: The Game is Afoot

About This Chapter

Chapter 27 holds two very different registers at the same time: the tense, buzzing excitement of Operation Squidape unfolding across the village, and a quiet conversation between Roland and his father about Mum.

The chapter opens with the whole team receiving their assignments, the wonderful joke of Roland's jumper on backwards, and the town filling with collectors. Then comes the conversation in The Park -- one of the novel's most tender moments -- in which Dad tells Roland that the way he thinks and sees the world is Mum's gift, left inside him. This is immediately followed by Roland's eyes leaking and Dad taking his hand, and then Danni arriving to offer coffee.

The second half of the chapter follows Operation Squidape inside The Itchy Fingers Emporium -- the photos arriving, the boxes being tracked, the birdcage confirmed -- building to Danni's final clear statement of what is still needed: hard evidence. The stolen items must be officially 'discovered.' The trap is almost sprung.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to prepare students for this chapter's blend of action and emotion.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever tried to concentrate on something important while feeling extremely excited? What happened, and how did you manage?
- Think about someone who has had an influence on you -- perhaps a parent, grandparent, teacher, or friend. What qualities do you think they have passed on to you?
- Danni says that even having lots of photos of people moving boxes is not enough to prove a crime. What would be needed to make the evidence legally useful?
- Roland compares the team to a giant Squidape working together. What makes a good team? Does every member need to do the same thing?
- At what point do you think the investigation will reach the moment where the stolen items are officially 'discovered' inside the Emporium?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapter 27. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
allocated	Assigned or distributed to a person for a specific purpose or task.
erupting	Bursting out suddenly and dramatically -- used here to describe Roland's excitement.
scaffolding	A temporary structure of poles and boards used to support workers during construction or repair.
taxidermy	The art of preparing and preserving the bodies of animals so they appear lifelike.
snippets	Small pieces or brief extracts of something, such as photographs or information.
emphasise	To give special importance or prominence to something in speech or writing.
murky	Dark, dirty, or difficult to see through; also used figuratively for something unclear or suspicious.
abuzz	Full of activity, noise, or excited conversation.
submerged	Hidden beneath the surface; overwhelmed by something below the visible level.
flustered	Anxious and confused; rattled or out of sorts.
persistence	Continuing firmly in a course of action despite difficulty or opposition.
remarkable	Worthy of special notice; unusual and impressive.
subsided	Became less intense or severe; gradually died down.
glimpses	Brief or partial views of something; fleeting sightings.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - The Language of Evidence

Chapter 27 contains several important words and phrases about what evidence is, what it proves, and what it does not prove. Read each statement below and decide whether it describes evidence, proof, a clue, or a theory. Write your answer in the second column.

Statement	Evidence, Proof, Clue, or Theory?
Photos of Myra Dempsey loading boxes into the postal van	
The label 'A-1 Double Plus Company' on boxes in the cave	
Roland's diagram connecting Smedley Smooth to the LIAR membership form	
Mr Rumpy's video of Daphne Crabbe unpacking boxes	
The Coronation Snowdome found at The Itchy Fingers Emporium	
Danni's statement: 'All we have are photos of people moving boxes -- nothing illegal about that'	

Activity 2 - What Has Been Left Inside You?

Dad tells Roland: 'The way you think and look at the world is the way she did, and that's her very own little gift that she's left inside you, that you'll always have.' This is one of the most powerful ideas in the novel.

Think of someone who has had a strong influence on you -- a parent, grandparent, teacher, or friend -- and write three qualities or ways of thinking that you believe they have passed on to you. Explain how you see each quality in yourself.

Person: _____

Quality 1: _____

How I see it in myself: _____

Quality 2: _____

How I see it in myself: _____

Quality 3: _____

How I see it in myself: _____

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text to support your answers.

Literal Comprehension: Operation Squidape Begins

1. What assignment does Danni give to each of the following team members: Miss Leadbetter, Mr Frogget, Mr Rumpy, Mrs Lester-Crabbe, Dad, and Roland?
2. What comic mistake does Roland make while getting ready, and what does Dad notice about it?
3. What do you think Roland buys at The Itchy Fingers Emporium while searching for the bait items?
4. Summarise the sequence of photos and messages that come in from the collectors during the operation inside the Emporium.
5. What does Danni say they still need, even though they have plenty of photographs?

Literal Comprehension: The Conversation in The Park

6. What does Dad ask Roland about before Operation Squidape begins?
7. What does Roland say he wants most of all but cannot have?
8. What does Dad say about the way Roland thinks and sees the world? What does he call this?
9. How does Roland physically respond to what Dad says? What does Dad do in response?
10. What does Danni say to Dad about looking normal even when dealing with loss?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Roland says his brain is buzzing 'in a good way -- not like it does when it gets overloaded.' What does this tell us about the difference between the anxiety he has experienced throughout the novel and the excitement he feels now?

2. Dad says: 'She'd have loved this adventure! But you've collected the pieces, arranged them in a logical pattern, and uncovered a smuggling plot as a result.' How does this description of Roland's method echo the way Mum was described earlier in the novel?
3. Danni says Roland's eyes were 'not just pretending to' take him seriously. Why is this distinction important to Roland, and what does it tell us about some of his past experiences with adults?
4. Dad suggests that Smedley might not only be motivated by money -- he might also be doing it for his SAD membership. How does this add complexity to Smedley as an antagonist? Is he more sympathetic, or less?
5. Danni says the photos prove a trail but not a crime: 'All we have are photos of people moving boxes -- nothing illegal about that.' Why is this distinction so important in a legal sense? What does it mean for the operation?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. Dad tells Roland that Mum's way of thinking is 'her very own little gift that she's left inside you.' Do you think this is true -- that people leave parts of themselves in those who loved them? How does this idea connect to the novel's earlier themes of memory and loss?
2. Danni says Roland is 'remarkable' and that she doesn't know many adults who could have pieced this together the way he did. Do you agree? What specific qualities has Roland demonstrated throughout this investigation that make him effective? Are any of them connected to the way his mind works?
3. The chapter holds both deep grief and genuine excitement at the same time, without either cancelling the other out. Do you think this is realistic -- can people feel joy and sadness simultaneously? What does the author achieve by placing the conversation about Mum immediately before the operation begins?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

1. Dad says that the way Roland thinks and sees the world is Mum's gift, left inside him. Think about someone who has shaped the way you think, notice things, or approach problems. Write about what they have given you, and how you see it in yourself
2. Roland says: 'I really miss her. She'd have brilliant ideas about what to do next, but I'll never know what they are.' Write about something you wish you could share with someone who is no longer in your life -- a discovery, an achievement, or an adventure. What do you imagine they would say?

3. Roland drapes a tea towel over a stuffed moose's head because its glassy eyes give him the shivers. Write a short comic scene from the moose's perspective -- what does the moose think of life inside The Itchy Fingers Emporium?
4. Danni describes her job as regularly revealing that 'normal people, normal families, normal towns' have murky things going on underneath. Do you think this is true of the world more broadly? What does it mean for how we see and judge people and places?
5. Roland compares the team to a giant Squidape, with himself as 'the brains inside the squid head.' Think about a team effort you have been part of -- in sport, in school, or in life. What role did you play, and how did different people's strengths make the team work?

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for whole-class discussion, small group work, or a Socratic seminar.

Inheritance, Memory, and What We Carry Forward

- Dad says Roland's way of seeing and thinking is Mum's gift, left inside him. Do you think personality traits, ways of thinking, and values can be passed from one person to another? How does this happen?
- Roland says he wants most of all to tell Mum about the adventure, but he can't. How do people keep sharing things with those they have lost? What are the different ways we communicate with people who are no longer here?
- Danni says that from the outside, Roland and Dad look like a normal father and son enjoying the countryside, but underneath they are carrying something huge. What does this tell us about the gap between how people appear and what they are really experiencing?

Evidence, Patience, and the Law

- Danni tells the team that photos of boxes being moved prove nothing illegal. How does this feel after all the effort they have put in? What does it teach us about the difference between knowing something and proving it in a legal sense?
- Danni says they need to wait until the stolen items are officially 'discovered' inside the shop. What would that discovery look like, and why does it matter so much for the case?
- The team has done everything right -- planning, surveillance, photos, timeline. But they still need one more thing. Is this frustrating or does it feel fair? What would the alternative be -- acting on suspicion alone?

Roland as the Head of Operation Squidape

- Danni assigns Roland the role of co-ordinator -- the head of Squidape. He has gone from waiting on a bottom step to leading a police-assisted investigation of a smuggling ring. What has made this transformation possible?
- Roland puts his jumper on backwards in his excitement. This is funny, but it also shows that he is still the same Roland -- excitement and routine anxiety coexist in him. Is this realistic? Can people grow enormously without losing their fundamental nature?
- Danni calls Roland 'remarkable' twice in this chapter. What does this recognition mean, coming from a professional police detective? How is it different from being called remarkable by a parent or a friend?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. What assignment does Danni give to Mrs Lester-Crabbe?

- A Watch the post office and Myra Dempsey's van
- B Keep an eye on Daphne Crabbe at the Emporium
- C Gather evidence on Smedley Smooth
- D Monitor Bill Turnip at the pier

Answer: C

2. What comic mistake does Roland make getting ready for Operation Squidape?

- A He forgets his notebook and has to run back upstairs
- B He puts his jumper on back-to-front
- C He puts on one shoe from each pair
- D He leaves his yellow envelope behind

Answer: B

3. What does Roland find and buy at The Itchy Fingers Emporium while searching for the bait items?

- A A Squidape comic he hasn't read

- B A small flat round object -- quite distinctive and very cheap
- C An old badge from Mr Frogget's collection
- D A uranium glass teacup

Answer: B

4. What does Dad tell Roland is 'her very own little gift' left inside him?

- A His love of antiques and collecting
- B His ability to make friends easily
- C The way he thinks and looks at the world
- D His sense of humour and love of jokes

Answer: C

5. What does Danni say about the photographs the team has gathered?

- A They are enough to make an arrest immediately
- B They are worthless and need to be retaken

- C They are fantastically helpful but only show people moving boxes -- nothing illegal -- and more is needed
- D They confirm the smuggling beyond all doubt

Answer: C

6. What does Roland say he wants most of all but cannot have?

- A A full set of Squidape comics
- B To solve the case entirely on his own without Danni's help
- C To go back to the stuck point one more time
- D To tell Mum about their adventure

Answer: D

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
Danni assigns Roland the role of co-ordinator -- the brains of Operation Squidape.	True
Roland's jumper was on inside-out when he came downstairs for the operation.	False
The village was quiet and almost empty when Operation Squidape began.	False
Mr Rumpy's video showed Daphne Crabbe unpacking boxes at The Itchy Fingers Emporium.	True
Miss Leadbetter's confirmation message read: 'The treasure has entered the building.'	True
Danni told the team they had collected enough evidence to make arrests immediately.	False
Dad suggested that Smedley Smooth might be involved partly to boost his chances of SAD membership.	True
Roland successfully found and kept track of both the birdcage and the uranium skull.	False

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. In your own words, explain what Dad means when he says Mum has left 'her very own little gift' inside Roland.

2. Explain why the photographs gathered by the team are not yet enough for Danni to take action.

3. What does Danni say needs to happen before they can act? What are they waiting for?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapter 27 to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Vocabulary activities; language of evidence sorting activity; discussion of how 'murky' and 'abuzz' work figuratively in the chapter.
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Analysis of how the chapter holds two tones (adventure and grief) simultaneously; discussion of Dad's phrase 'her very own little gift left inside you.'
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Discussion of how 'glimpses' and 'subsided' carry emotional weight in the Mum conversation; how 'The treasure has entered the building' works as a dramatic single-photo message.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Dual-section literal comprehension (operation + conversation); inferential questions on the difference between good-buzz and overload, Mum's gift, and Danni's comment about taking Roland seriously.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Evaluative comprehension; synthesising the full emotional and narrative arc; comparing Roland's brain-buzz in this chapter with earlier episodes.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Discussion questions on inheritance and memory, evidence and patience, and Roland as the head of the operation.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended tasks: inherited gifts reflection; what you would tell someone who is gone; moose's perspective (comic); Danni's normal-vs-underneath observation.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Analysis of how the chapter's dual tone (excitement / grief) works; how Dad's words about Mum frame Roland's entire character arc.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Discussion of the chapter's structural balance between the operation and the personal conversation; how the placement of the Mum conversation immediately before the operation is deliberate and meaningful.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on inherited qualities, communicating with those who are gone, teamwork, and the gap between how people appear and how they feel.

Teacher Notes and Learning Suggestions

The Dual Tone: Adventure and Grief Together

Chapter 27 is the novel's most sophisticated handling of its two parallel threads. The excitement of Operation Squidape and the grief of Roland missing Mum do not take turns -- they exist simultaneously, within a single scene in The Park. Dad's words about Mum being a gift inside Roland are immediately followed by Roland's eyes leaking, Dad taking his hand, and a long silence looking at the sea. Then Danni arrives and they go for coffee, and within minutes they are back inside the Emporium watching for the birdcage. The grief does not stop the adventure, and the adventure does not diminish the grief. This is one of the novel's most truthful observations about how life actually works. Teachers may wish to discuss this explicitly: is it realistic that someone could feel both of these things in the same half hour? How does the author manage the transition between them?

Mum as a Presence: The Gift That Remains

Dad's description of Mum's way of thinking as a gift left inside Roland is the novel's most complete and consoling statement about what remains after loss. It connects to the earlier image of keeping Mum alive through stories and photos (Chapter 19), but goes further: it says that Mum is not just remembered, she is carried forward actively, in the way Roland sees the world. This is worth dwelling on in discussion. It reframes Roland's neurodivergent, pattern-finding, list-making, detail-noticing mind not as a challenge to be managed but as a gift -- and one that came from Mum. This is a powerful and potentially very meaningful idea for students who have experienced loss, or who see their own ways of thinking as obstacles rather than strengths.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
PDHPE - Wellbeing and Loss	Use Dad's description of Mum's gift to discuss how people we love shape who we become. Connect to the school's wellbeing program and the concept of resilient identity -- the idea that we carry forward what was given to us.
English - Narrative Writing	Use the chapter's dual-tone structure as a model for student writing. Students write a short scene in which a character experiences two very different emotions at the same time -- joy and sadness, excitement and fear -- and shows both without resolving either.
Science / Media Literacy	Danni explains that photos of people moving boxes prove nothing without context. Discuss how photographs are used as evidence in real investigations -- and how they can also mislead. What makes photographic evidence reliable?
Visual Arts / Design	Roland drapes a tea towel over the moose's eyes. Students design a 'souvenir of The Itchy Fingers Emporium' -- a postcard, badge, or small item -- that captures the spirit of the shop. Display as a gallery.

Differentiation Suggestions

Student Need	Suggested Adjustment
Extension	Students write an extended analytical paragraph responding to the following prompt: 'In Chapter 27, the author shows that grief and adventure can coexist. How does the structure, language, and character of the chapter achieve this?' Use specific evidence from the chapter.
Support	Provide a graphic organiser with two columns -- 'Operation Squidape events' and 'Conversation about Mum' -- for students to record the key events of the chapter before attempting comprehension questions. Allow sentence starters for written responses.
EAL/D	Pre-teach 'evidence,' 'trail,' and 'timeline' in the context of detective work. Discuss the concept of something being 'illegal' versus 'suspicious.' Allow additional reading time, a vocabulary scaffold, and verbal responses.
Early Finishers	Write the scene from Bill Turnip's perspective inside The Itchy Fingers Emporium. He sees Roland and tips his hat. Does he recognise Roland from the pier? Does he suspect anything? What is he there to do, and what is he feeling?

PART 16

Chapter 28: The Eagle Has Landed

Chapter 29: Good Job, Squidape!

Chapter 30: The Last Piece of the Puzzle

About These Final Chapters

The final three chapters of *The Adventures of Squidape* deliver everything the novel has promised - and more. They are triumphant, funny, tender, and deeply satisfying.

Chapter 28 ('The Eagle Has Landed') covers the discovery sequence inside The Itchy Fingers Emporium: Smedley Smooth's theatrical 'findings' of the Paradise Birdcage and the Uranium Cranium, and his decision to hold an impromptu auction. Chapter 29 ('Good Job, Squidape!') is the climax: Roland swings into action, snatches the skull from Daphne Crabbe's hands, the police make their arrests, and Dad hoists Roland onto his shoulders to three cheers. It is pure, uncomplicated joy - the moment the whole novel has been building to.

Chapter 30 ('The Last Piece of the Puzzle') gathers the team one month later at The Trevor Trove for a celebration. Danni plays Bill Turnip's secret recording of the committee planning the scheme - the novel's most revelatory scene. The recording explains everything, and adds unexpected humanity to people who might otherwise seem simply villainous. The chapter ends with Roland giving Mr Frogget the PIECE badge he found in the Emporium, and the novel's final lines - 'Turns out I'm just like my hero, after all' - completing both the mystery arc and Roland's personal journey.

Before Reading: Activating Prior Knowledge

Use these prompts to prepare students for the novel's conclusion.

Discussion Prompts

- Think about all the characters involved in the smuggling ring. Do you feel any sympathy for any of them? Is there a difference between the committee and Smedley Smooth?
- Roland has been compared to Squidape throughout the novel. What would the ultimate Squidape moment look like for him?
- What loose ends do you think still need to be resolved by the end of the novel?
- The novel began with Roland's morning routine and a description of his street. How do you expect the novel to end? What kind of ending feels right for this story?

Key Vocabulary and Spelling Words

The following words appear in Chapters 28, 29, and 30. Explore meanings before, during, or after reading.

Word	Meaning / Context Clue
aloft	Up in the air; raised high above the ground.
guano	The droppings of seabirds or bats, often collected as fertiliser; here used to describe the parrot droppings in the birdcage.
conqueror	A person who has overcome or defeated an opponent; a victor.
indifference	Lack of interest or concern; not caring about something.
vantage point	A position that gives a good view of something; a high or favourable viewpoint.
simultaneously	At exactly the same time; happening together.
authenticity	The quality of being genuine and real, not a copy or imitation.
forensic	Relating to the use of scientific methods to investigate a crime; relating to legal evidence.
conviction	A firm belief or opinion; also the legal finding that someone is guilty of a crime.
enigmatic	Mysterious and difficult to understand; having a quality that is hard to explain.
berserk	Out of control with excitement or anger; frenzied.
insurance	Protection against risk; here used to mean evidence kept as a safeguard against being blamed.
decluttering	Removing unnecessary or unwanted items from a space; used here ironically by Bill to describe stealing.
indentation	A mark or hollow made by pressing into a surface.

Spelling Activities

Activity 1 - The Recording: Voice and Character

Chapter 30 contains a transcript of a secret recording of the committee's planning meeting. Each committee member has a distinct voice. Complete the table below by matching each character to the quality of their voice in the recording, then write one quote or near-quote that shows this quality.

Character	Voice quality and example from the recording
Daphne Crabbe	
Myra Dempsey	
Arno Picken	
Bill Turnip	

Activity 2 - The Full Circle: Returning Themes and Images

The Adventures of Squidape is full of images, objects, and ideas that return at the end of the novel with new meaning. Complete the table below, tracing each element from its first appearance to its final significance.

Element	First appearance and meaning	Final appearance and meaning
The pineapple		
The PIECE badge		
The Squidape comics		
The morning list		
'Good job, Squidape!'		

Activity 3 - Spelling in Sentences

Choose five words from the vocabulary list. Write a sentence for each that clearly shows the word's meaning. Underline the vocabulary word.

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences, using evidence from the text.

Chapter 28: The Eagle Has Landed - Literal Comprehension

1. What does 'The eagle has landed' mean as a coded message from Dad, and why is Roland initially confused by it?
2. Describe how Smedley Smooth 'discovers' the Paradise Birdcage. How does he make it look convincing to the crowd?
3. What does Smedley say about the birdcage, and what scientific detail does he include about the contents of the poo tray?
4. How does Smedley 'discover' the Uranium Cranium? What does he use to make it glow?
5. What change to the original plan does Smedley announce, and why does this create extra excitement?

Chapter 29: Good Job, Squidape! - Literal Comprehension

6. What does Roland notice from his hiding place on the lighting rig that seems odd? Why are pairs of people leaving the room?
7. Describe Roland's action during the auction. What does he use, what does he do, and where does he land?
8. What does Danni announce over the loudspeaker as the police make their arrests?
9. Who is arrested outside The Itchy Fingers Emporium? Name all five.
10. What does Danni say the bird poo DNA will be able to prove?
11. How do Dad and Danni celebrate Roland's success immediately after the arrests?

Chapter 30: The Last Piece of the Puzzle - Literal Comprehension

12. Describe how the shed at The Trevor Trove is prepared for the celebration.
13. How did the police obtain the recording of the committee's planning meeting, and why had Bill Turnip made it?
14. According to the recording, whose idea was it to involve Smedley Smooth, and how did Myra know about him?
15. What does Danni explain about how the village residents felt about the Society's success, and what fairy tale does she compare it to?
16. What is inside the small box Roland gives to Mr Frogget, and how does Roland announce it to the room?
17. What are the final words of the novel? What do they tell us about where Roland has arrived?

Inferential Comprehension (Reading Between the Lines)

1. Smedley Smooth's 'discoveries' in Chapter 28 are entirely performed - he knows exactly what he will find and where. Yet the crowd is utterly convinced. What does this tell us

about the nature of performance, reputation, and the willingness of people to believe what they want to believe?

2. Roland notices pairs of people quietly slipping out of the room during the auction. These are the undercover police officers. Why does the author make Roland the one who notices this detail - and why does this feel right?
3. Bill Turnip is described as cheerful, kind, and happy to help Roland throughout the novel. Hearing his voice on the recording, planning the theft operation, complicates this. How do you reconcile the Bill Turnip Roland met at the pier with the Bill Turnip on the recording?
4. The village residents 'all knew The Itchy Fingers Emporium was their goose, and no-one wanted to stop it from laying.' How does Danni's fairy tale comparison illuminate the community's complicity? Is wilful ignorance the same as guilt?
5. Roland's final thought is 'Mum would be so proud.' He is not saying she is watching - he is saying he has lived in a way that would make her proud. How is this different from the earlier chapters, where he was waiting for her to come back?

Evaluative Comprehension (Thinking Deeply)

1. The committee's planning recording reveals that the scheme began with genuinely good intentions - raising money for the church roof and the village - before sliding into crime. Does this origin make the committee members more sympathetic? At what point did they cross a line that could not be uncrossed?
2. The novel ends with: 'Turns out I'm just like my hero, after all.' This is the fulfilment of an arc that began with Roland reading comics on the bottom step. What does it mean to be 'just like your hero'? Does Roland have to be extraordinary, or does the novel suggest something different?
3. The Adventures of Squidape is simultaneously a mystery novel, a story about grief, and a story about growing up. Which of these threads felt most important to you as a reader, and why? How does the novel's ending honour all three?

Open-Ended Short Answer Questions

Think carefully and share your own ideas. Write 3-5 sentences for each response.

A Note to Teachers

These final open-ended questions invite both personal reflection and whole-novel synthesis. They are designed to be the closing activities of the novel study, and may work well as extended written tasks, oral presentations, or the focus of a final class celebration of the book.

1. Roland swings on the rope and snatches the skull - his Squidape moment. Write about a time when you did something brave or bold that you were not sure you could do. What made you take the risk, and how did it feel when it was over?
2. The recording reveals the committee's original good intentions. Can good intentions ever excuse criminal actions? Write your own view, using examples from the novel and from real life if you can.
3. Roland's last thought is that Mum will be proud of him. Write a letter from Mum to Roland - imagining what she might say if she could read what he has done throughout this adventure.
4. The novel ends with 'the last piece of the puzzle' - the PIECE badge returned to Mr Frogget. Think about the way the word PIECE works here: it is both the badge's misprinted word and a symbol of something being made whole. What pieces of Roland's life have been put back together by the end of the novel? Write about what has changed.
5. If there were a sequel to The Adventures of Squidape, what do you think it would be about? Use what you know about Roland, Dad, the collectors, and Danni Champion to write a short pitch for the next adventure.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for a final whole-class discussion or celebration of the novel. These are designed to be reflective and wide-ranging, drawing on the full text.

The Scheme and the Community

- The committee started with a leaking church roof and ended up running a national theft operation. Trace the steps in between. Where was the moment the plan became irrecoverable?
- Bill Turnip describes stealing as 'recycling' and 'decluttering.' What does this tell us about how people justify wrongdoing to themselves? Can you think of other examples of this kind of self-justifying language?
- The village residents benefited from the scheme without knowing the full truth. Are they innocent? What responsibility do we have to ask questions about where good things come from?

Heroes, Villains, and the World Between

- The Squidape comics feature simple villains who are caught and jailed. The real villains in this novel are more complex - they have good intentions and community ties. Which version of villainy do you find more interesting, and why?

- Roland is the hero of this story, but he did not act alone. Dad, the collectors, and Danni all played essential roles. Can a hero be a hero if they have a team? What is the difference between a hero and a leader?
- Smedley Smooth is vain, greedy, and willing to commit fraud. But he has also donated to local causes and used his knowledge genuinely in a few cases. Is there any redemption for Smedley? What would it look like?

The Journey: Roland, Grief, and Growing Up

- Roland began the novel sitting on a bottom step, waiting. He ends it being hoisted onto shoulders to three cheers. What has changed, and what has stayed the same? Is Roland a different person, or the same person in a different situation?
- The novel suggests that grief and adventure, sadness and joy, can exist at the same time. Have you found this to be true in your own experience? Does the novel give you any new ways of thinking about that?
- 'Turns out I'm just like my hero, after all.' What does it mean, to you, to be like your hero? Does this require extraordinary powers, or something else entirely?

Quiz Questions

Circle or write the correct answer for each question.

Section A - Multiple Choice

1. What does Roland use to swing across the stage and snatch the Uranium Cranium?

- A A climbing rope from the cave
- B The same strong rope he had seen on Bill Turnip's fishing boat, now holding the old cinema curtains
- C A bungee cord from the storage room
- D Squidape's tentacles (he had finally transformed)

Answer: B

2. What does Danni announce over the loudspeaker?

- A That the auction is cancelled due to a fire alarm

- B That the skull has been identified as a forgery
- C That her name is Detective Danni Champion and the skull is not for sale
- D That everyone must evacuate the building immediately

Answer: C

3. Why had Bill Turnip made a secret recording of the committee meeting?

- A He wanted evidence to sell to a journalist
- B He kept it as insurance in case the other members tried to blame him if they were caught
- C He planned to play it at the village meeting

D He sent it to Danni before the investigation began

Answer: B

4. Whose idea was it to involve Smedley Smooth in the scheme?

- A Arno Picken's
- B Bill Turnip's
- C Daphne Crabbe's
- D Myra Dempsey's

Answer: D

5. What fairy tale does Danni use to explain why the village residents never questioned the scheme?

- A Cinderella
- B The Pied Piper
- C The goose that laid the golden egg
- D Jack and the Beanstalk

Answer: C

6. What are the final words of the novel?

- A 'Good job, Squidape!'
- B 'Turns out I'm just like my hero, after all.'
- C 'And that was only the beginning.'
- D 'Mum will be so proud.'

Answer: B

Section B - True or False

Statement	True or False?
Smedley Smooth genuinely did not know in advance that the birdcage or skull would be at the Emporium.	False
Roland swings on a rope and snatches the Uranium Cranium from Daphne Crabbe.	True
The five people arrested outside the Emporium included Smedley Smooth and Arno Picken.	True
Bill Turnip was reluctant to confess at the police station and refused to help.	False
The village residents knew the full details of how the Emporium became so successful.	False
Roland gives Mr Frogget a Squidape comic as a final surprise gift.	False
Miss Leadbetter threatens to chop the Squidape cake just as she chopped the tea cake earlier.	True
The final line of the novel is spoken by Dad.	False

Section C - Short Answer Recall

1. What were the five arrests made outside The Itchy Fingers Emporium? Name each person and their role in the operation.

2. In the recording, how does Bill Turnip describe the act of stealing from collectors? What does his language reveal about how he justified it to himself?

3. What are the final lines of the novel, and what do they mean?

ACARA Curriculum Links

The following table maps Chapters 28, 29, and 30 to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (English, Years 3-4).

Strand	Content Description	Relevant Activity
Language	AC9E3LA01 / AC9E4LA01 - Understand how language features and vocabulary choices are used for different purposes.	Vocabulary activities; analysis of Bill Turnip's self-justifying euphemisms ('recycling,' 'decluttering'); discussion of how Smedley's theatrical language creates performed authenticity.
Language	AC9E3LA03 / AC9E4LA03 - Understand how ideas are expressed and how language choices create effect.	Recording transcript analysis: how each committee member's voice reveals character; discussion of the final line as a complete sentence carrying the weight of the whole novel.
Language	AC9E3LA06 / AC9E4LA06 - Recognise how vocabulary choices contribute to meaning and engage the reader.	Full-circle activity tracing key images and objects; discussion of how 'PIECE' works as both a badge word and a thematic symbol.
Literacy	AC9E3LY01 / AC9E4LY01 - Identify and use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning.	Three-chapter literal comprehension questions; inferential questions on performed discovery, Bill's recording, the golden goose metaphor, and Roland's final thought about Mum.
Literacy	AC9E3LY02 / AC9E4LY02 - Use comprehension strategies to interpret, compare, and synthesise information.	Evaluative comprehension; full-circle tracing activity synthesising the whole novel; whole-novel discussion questions.
Literacy	AC9E3LY03 / AC9E4LY03 - Listen and contribute to discussions to share ideas and points of view.	Final whole-novel discussion questions on the scheme, heroes and villains, and Roland's journey.
Literacy	AC9E3LY05 / AC9E4LY05 - Create written texts for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary.	Open-ended tasks: letter from Mum; sequel pitch; the PIECE as symbol; personal brave moment.
Literature	AC9E3LE01 / AC9E4LE01 - Discuss how language represents ideas and character perspectives.	Analysis of how the recording gives each committee member a distinct and revealing voice; how Roland's final thought shifts from waiting for Mum to living in a way that honours her.
Literature	AC9E3LE02 / AC9E4LE02 - Recognise how authors use text structures and language features to shape meaning.	Discussion of how the PIECE badge ties the ending to the beginning; how the rope echoes the Spud; how the Squidape cake brings the comics to life; the structural satisfaction of the full-circle ending.
Literature	AC9E3LE03 / AC9E4LE03 - Make connections between personal experiences and characters in texts.	Open-ended questions on brave moments, good intentions, letters to the lost, pieces put back together, and being like your hero.

Teacher Notes: Celebrating the Whole Novel

The Recording: Revelation and Humanity

The transcript of the committee meeting in Chapter 30 is one of the most sophisticated pieces of writing in the novel. By letting the villains speak in their own voices, the author gives them something that a third-person summary never could: humanity. We hear the squabbling, the hesitation, the flashes of conscience ('You mean steal things from other people?'), and the sliding slope from fundraising to crime. This is a gift to the classroom: the transcript can be read aloud as a reader's theatre exercise, with different students taking different roles. This brings the characters to life and makes the moral complexity viscerally clear. It also demonstrates that even people who do wrong are not simply evil - they are people who made choices.

Full-Circle Closure: The Art of the Ending

Chapter 30 is built on returns and completions. Miss Leadbetter threatens to chop the cake - echoing her earlier savage cutting in Chapter 23. The Squidape cake brings the comics to life. The PIECE badge returns to Mr Frogget. Dad hoists Roland on his shoulders - echoing the bottom step. The final line, 'Turns out I'm just like my hero, after all,' picks up the thread first established in Chapter 1 when Roland described Squidape, and placed at the centre of the novel by Jim Bottle in Chapter 4. Teachers may wish to take students back through the novel to find all the full-circle moments, as an exercise in appreciating how carefully this story has been constructed. This is also excellent preparation for students' own narrative writing: the idea that a good ending does not arrive out of nowhere, but grows from seeds planted at the beginning.

Roland's Final Thought: 'Mum Will Be So Proud'

The penultimate sentence of the novel - 'Mum will be so proud' - is not followed by qualification or explanation. Roland does not say 'I wish she were here' or 'I miss her.' He states it simply, as a fact, as if her pride is something real and present. This is the furthest point of Roland's grief journey: not denial, not despair, not even acceptance as resignation - but a full, living, active sense of connection to someone who is gone. She is not here, but she is with him. Her pride is real because he carries her inside him. For students who have experienced loss, this may be the most meaningful sentence in the book. Handle with care, and with the trust that the author has earned.

Whole-Novel Extension Activities

Activity	Description
Reader's Theatre	Assign roles from the Chapter 30 recording transcript and perform it as a reader's theatre piece. Debrief: what did you understand about each character that you hadn't before?
Full-Circle Map	Students create a visual map of the novel's recurring images and objects (pineapple, list, step, speech balloon, snowdome, rope, PIECE badge, comics), tracing each through the novel and marking what it means at each appearance.
Letter from Mum	Students write Mum's letter to Roland, responding to the adventure he has had. Discuss first: what do we know about Mum? What would she say, and how would she say it?
Character Arc Essay	Students write a short essay tracing Roland's arc from Chapter 1 to Chapter 30, identifying the key turning points and what drove each change. Use specific evidence from at least five chapters.
Sequel Pitch	Students write a one-paragraph pitch for The Adventures of Squidape 2 - a new mystery for Roland, Dad, and the collectors. Share pitches and vote on the most exciting idea.

Cross-Curriculum Links

Learning Area	Connection
Drama - Reader's Theatre	Perform the committee recording as a reader's theatre. Discuss characterisation, subtext, and moral complexity. What choices did you make about how to play each character?
PDHPE - Wellbeing	Use Roland's final thought about Mum as a springboard for discussing how we carry forward the influence of people we have loved and lost. Connect to school wellbeing frameworks around grief, resilience, and positive identity.
HASS - Civics and Law	Discuss what sentences the committee members might receive. What factors might the court consider? Is there a difference in culpability between Bill (the architect of the scheme), Smedley (the profiteer), and Daphne (the facilitator)?
English - Narrative Craft	Using the full-circle activity, students identify at least five planted seeds from the early chapters that pay off in the final chapters. Discuss: how does an author plan this? What does it feel like as a reader when a planted detail returns?

A Final Note for Teachers

The Adventures of Squidape is a rare novel: it is simultaneously funny, genuinely moving, rigorously plotted, and deeply compassionate in its portrayal of neurodiversity, grief, and growing up. It gives students a hero who is not extraordinary in conventional ways - he cannot fight or fly or transform - but who is extraordinary in the ways that matter: observant, brave in his own way, loyal, and capable of extraordinary love.

For some students, Roland will be the first fictional character who thinks the way they do. For others, he will be a window into a way of experiencing the world they have never understood before. Both are gifts.

If you have read this novel with your class, you have given them something worth keeping. Thank you for your care and attention in teaching it.

Good job, Squidape.