

Mystery at Manuscript Mansion

When Freya found out that she won the student writing competition, she couldn't believe her luck. Her mystery story had been picked first from all the other entries. The judges liked her teen detective, who solved crimes at her high school by being observant and asking a lot of questions. Freya had modeled the character on herself. Although she had never found a real-life crime to solve, she was sure she'd be able to use her brains to figure things out if she ever had the chance.

The grand prize for the winning story was a week of writing camp at Manuscript Mansion, the seaside home of Lolo Xander. Lolo, a super famous mystery writer, was Freya's idol. Freya had to pinch herself to make sure she wasn't dreaming. But when she boarded the bus to the camp a month later, it felt more like a nightmare.

The bus was empty. Where were all the other winners? Freya had been told that there would be a student from each school in the county. But somehow she was the only one aboard the dark and stale-smelling bus as it looped along the cliff road, perilously close to the edge. The only thing that made the trip bearable was the view. The road was lined with sea roses.

When the bus pulled up to Lolo's house the nightmare deepened. No one was there. Freya knocked on the shiny black door. "Hello! Is anyone at

home?” she called into the void. No answer. The door was unlocked. Freya walked through to the kitchen and felt relief. The appliances were sparkling and the marble counters were heaped with treats. There was a bowl of fruit and a platter of cookies, a basket of bread, and even a chocolate cake. Clearly they were expecting a crowd. Surely more winners would arrive soon, Lolo Xander would come and welcome them all, and a wonderful week of writing wisdom would begin. Freya could hardly wait.

But wait she did. And wait and wait. No one came. Freya tried her phone, but there was no signal. Where was everyone? Most importantly, where was Lolo Xander? Freya explored the house for clues, but all she found was a room with her name on it. Inside was a desk with a computer and a vase full of sea roses. Blinking on the screen was the word “write.”

Freya didn’t know what else to do, so she *did* write. She wrote the next installment in her teen detective series. As she wrote, she wondered, what would her character do? Observe. And ask questions. Her first observation came with a shock – the computer screen was empty! She knew she hadn’t pressed delete. Her story had been sucked into the void along with Lolo Xander.

Freya ran out of the house and down the lane. She didn’t know where she was going at first, but half way there she realized. She thought about what she had observed on her desk and ran faster, channeling her inner



detective and making her way back to the cliff road. Sure enough there was the bus. And on the bus was Lolo Xander, staring at a screen containing Freya's story, but now the story had Lolo's name on it.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. What is the nickname of Lolo Xander's house? (Literal)
 - a. Mystery Manor
 - b. Manuscript Mansion
 - c. Story Castle
 - d. Paper Palace

2. What treat was not on the counter in the kitchen? (Literal)
 - a. Cookies
 - b. Bread
 - c. Fruit
 - d. Pie

3. What had Freya observed that caused her to go back to the cliff road?
(Inferential)
 - a. A computer
 - b. A bottle of water
 - c. A vase of sea roses
 - d. A chocolate cake

4. What do you think Lolo was planning? (Inferential)
 - a. To host a writing camp
 - b. To steal Freya's story
 - c. To gather more sea roses
 - d. To eat chocolate cake

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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