



TalkforWriting

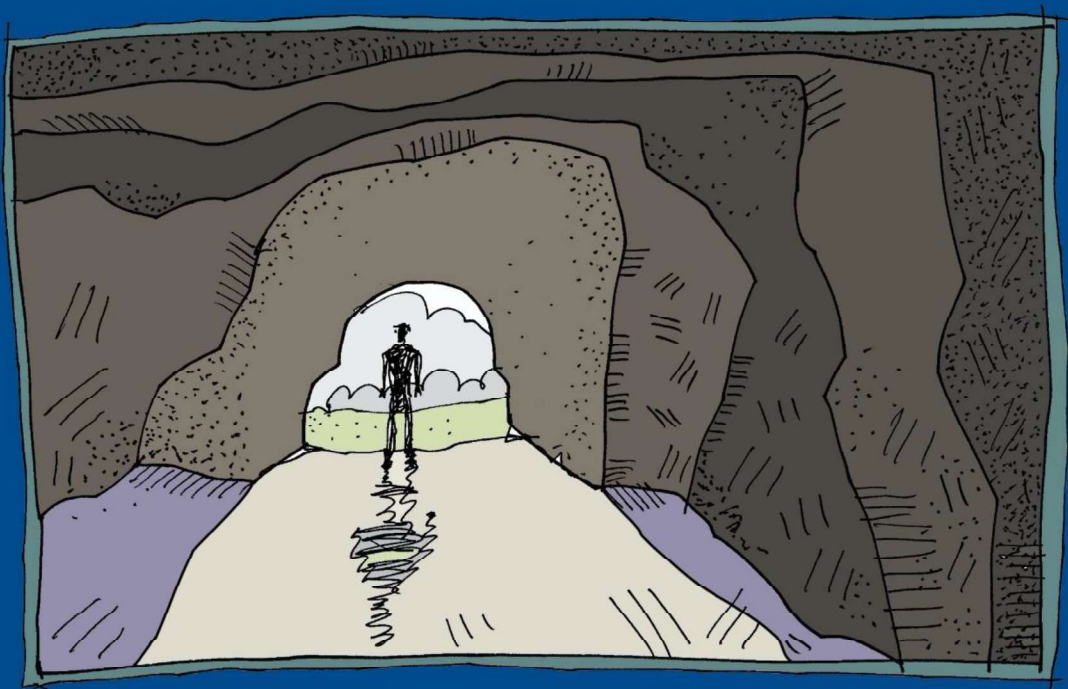
Year 6,7&8

Talk for Writing Home-school booklet

The Cave of Requirement

Working at greater depth

by Jamie Thomas



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Introduction

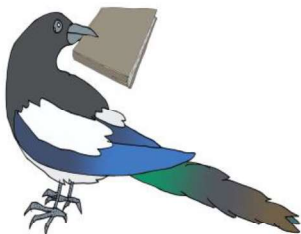
It is fair to say that we are currently living in a world where news holds a significant amount of power. News is instantaneous, popping up throughout our day through a vast range of media. In fact, news is so immediate that it sometimes draw us to question how valid it is; how robust and reliable it may be. In the eyes of some, it is this so called 'fake news' that fuels the interests of many.



So, what if you could control the headlines? What if you could decide the future? What if the news was a result of the decisions you made? *The Cave of Requirement* is a story that hands the power over to you, the reader. **You** will decide the path the story takes. **You** will decide the fate of our main character. **You** will be in control of tomorrow's news – so choose wisely!

Preparing to write a mystery story

As an author, it is highly recommended that you keep a jotter or notebook, otherwise known as a *magpie book*, by your side to capture any ideas you may have as the unit unfolds. This book can be used to make notes, jot down ideas and draft initial thoughts. *The Cave of Requirement* is a story with many mysterious twists and



turns. As the story unfolds, we will pause and dig under the surface of what is happening. Whilst I am keen for you to engage with the plot and the characters, I also want you to think about how it was created. This will support you in creating your own mystery stories.

Becoming a detective

Like any good detective investigating a case, it is essential that you notice and record all of the clues.

- ★ As the story develops, keep a timeline or flow chart of the key information that is offered to you, a bit like a detective's pin board. How you record this information is up to you, but you will need to look out for important dates and names, as well as information revealed about the characters involved in the mystery.



- ★ Look out for this icon throughout the workbook. Whenever you see it, make sure you go back and add in any key information.
- ★ Now, let's read the opening of the story.

The Cave of Requirement

DCI Seth Mackay trawled the piles of The Cornish Times that lay strewn across his desk, months of bad news that tainted his ambition. There had to be a clue somewhere and he had to be the one to crack the case. Sinking into his chair, he reread the headlines that plagued him.

4th July 1978

THREE VANISH WITHOUT TRACE

In the early hours of this morning, Cornish police confirmed that they are searching for three missing teenagers, who were last seen walking along the coastline at Pentire Point.

13th July 1978

MILLIE & MOLLIE STILL MISSING!

Last night, the father of missing schoolgirls Millie and Mollie Rayner again issued a heartfelt plea for any information that may help Devon and Cornwall police in the search for his daughters

21st July 1978

SNATCHED?

As yet another person in a matter of weeks seemingly disappears off the face of the earth, Polzeath residents have been left quaking in their boots as DCI Mackay continues to flounder.



★ What key information have we found out already? Jot down all of the clues, including names, dates and any other important information, and add it to your timeline.

Newspaper reports

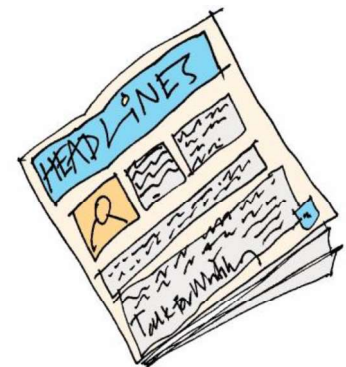
The opening of a newspaper article has two real ambitions – to hook the reader in and summarise what the article is about. The aim is to capture the reader’s interest so that they go on to read the rest of the article.

★ Re-read the three newspaper extracts and jot down how they hook you in and capture your interest. Which article do you think is the most effective and why? Remember to jot any learning points in your magpie book for future reference.

There are two main categories of newspaper: broadsheets and tabloids. Although there are many visual differences between the two types, the significant contrast is how they both choose to depict the news. Broadsheets tend to be more factual and formally written, compared to a tabloid, which often uses a technique called “hyperbole” – which means an exaggerated statement or claim not meant to be taken literally.

Headlines

The difference in style is often most apparent in headlines. Broadsheet headlines tend to be based on fact and are written in a more formal tone. In contrast, tabloid headlines often grab attention by exaggerated claims and tend to be playful and catchy, using techniques such as alliteration (same letter or sound), rhyme and word play (pun). But remember, headlines only have a few words in them and the shorter the words the better as there is not much space for the headline.



★ Re-read the three headlines in our story:

1. **THREE VANISH WITHOUT TRACE**

2. **MILLIE & MOLLIE STILL MISSING!**

3. **SNATCHED?**

★ What techniques has each journalist used? How do these set the tone for the article that follows? Would you expect to find it in a broadsheet or a tabloid paper?

e.g. 'Three vanish without trace' is a fairly plain and not playful headline. It is almost without emotion, with the journalist remaining impartial, distanced and professional at all times. This is likely to be an article taken from a broadsheet newspaper.

★ What would you say was the style of the other two headlines? Are they liable to be a tabloid or a broadsheet?



★ Imagine you are a journalist, writing tomorrow's headline about a high-profile bank robbery that took place last night. Try out some of the techniques we have discussed, including writing in the formal style, as well as playing with exaggeration, alliteration, rhyme and word play. Which do you find easiest to write? Remember to keep your headlines short.

★ If possible, share your headlines with someone and discuss which you think is most effective and which appeals to you most as a reader. If you have different opinions, try to establish why.

The Introduction

News articles in all types of newspapers always begin by grabbing the reader's attention by revealing: Who? What? When? Why? Where? (the 5Ws).

★ Complete the table below, inserting in all of the relevant information from the 3 articles in our story. The first one has been done for you.

	Three vanish without trace	Millie & Mollie Still Missing!	Snatched?
Who?	Cornish police		
What?	searching for three teenagers		
When?	early hours of this morning		
Why?	missing		
Where?	Pentire Point		

★ Now write down the 5Ws for your bank robbery article, or another article of your choice.



Grammar & sentence work

One of the most challenging things about constructing a really good introduction is trying to incorporate all of this information into just one sentence. Let's have a look at two of the grammar features that help us construct this effectively.

a) Adverbials

Adverbials can provide additional information about the when, where, why or how of an action. We like to refer to them as roving reporters as they are able to move about the sentence, adding in important information.

Adverbials of time are words, phrases or clauses that add detail about the time of the action. When they appear at the start of the sentence, they are referred to as ‘fronted adverbials’ and are followed by a comma.

In the early hours of this morning, Cornish police confirmed that they are searching for three missing teenagers, who were last seen walking along the coastline at Pentire Point.

It is possible to re-order the sentence and manipulate the position of the adverbial. This often slightly changes the meaning or emphasis of the sentence. For example:

Cornish police confirmed, **in the early hours of this morning,** that they are searching for three missing teenagers, who were last seen walking along the coastline at Pentire Point.

Cornish police confirmed that they are searching for three missing teenagers, who were last seen walking along the coastline at Pentire Point **in the early hours of this morning.**

In this instance, by placing *the time adverbial* at the end, we have changed the meaning of the sentence completely, insinuating that the teenagers were spotted in the early hours, not the police confirming the facts at this time.

- ★ Try playing around with the adverb position in the other two headlines. Consider how it alters the meaning and where the emphasis is best placed.
- ★ Now add in an adverbial of time into the sentence below. How many different variations can you come up with? Which works best in your opinion?

An infamous jewel thief, who has been on the run for the past two weeks following a series of raids in the Battersea area, was finally accosted by police.

- ★ Now test this out in your own sentence. Decide where you feel the adverbial of time has most impact and meaning.

b) Relative clauses



A relative clause provides additional information about someone or something in a sentence. It is a type of subordinate clause and relates directly to the noun. It typically begins with a relative pronoun:

who/whom/whose/which/that.

In the early hours of this morning, Cornish police confirmed that they are searching for three missing teenagers, **who were last seen walking along the coastline at Pentire Point.**

Last night, the father of missing schoolgirls, Millie and Mollie Rayner, issued a heartfelt plea for any information **that may help Devon and Cornwall police in the search for his daughters.**

A common question with relative clauses is whether you should use a comma to separate them from the main clause. Let's look at the two examples above.

In the first, the relative pronoun **who** is introducing additional information that is **not essential to the meaning of the sentence**. In other words, although it is helpful to know, we can still understand the sentence without it. **This relative clause could be removed and is therefore separated by a comma – it functions like drop-in information.**

In the second sentence, the relative pronoun **that** is introducing information that is **essential to the meaning of the sentence**. The girls' father does not want any old information, he wants information that may help police. **As this clause is vital to the meaning, you do not separate it with a comma.**

★ **Now test this out in your own journalistic sentence. Try out the different relative pronouns, remembering the rules about commas above.**

Now, let's continue the story. You can listen to this being read aloud here:
<https://soundcloud.com/talkforwriting/cave-of-requirement>

The shrill of his mobile snapped Mackay out of his nightmare. He snatched up the phone, still fuelled by the frustration that swelled inside him. "DCI Mackay, what do you ...?"

A charged voice cut him off. "Serg, it's Jones. You'd better come quick; we've found it."

Without thinking, Mackay leapt to his feet, grabbed his keys and stormed out of the office.

As he pulled up at Hayle Bay, Seth Mackay was thankful that it was getting late - the bay would be quiet. The recent public pressure was becoming more than he could bear and he needed time to think. Pulling up the lapels of his coat in preparation of the bitter wind that would be waiting for him, he stepped out of the car and hurried towards the beach.

"Serg, over 'ere!" A sense of relief flooded through Ryan Jones at the sight of his boss. Thrusting the ledger forward into Mackay's hands, he felt as though the weight of the world had been lifted from his shoulders.

Mackay stared at the black book as confusion momentarily blinded him.

"It links 'em all Serg - they're all accounted for. Every last one!" Filled with anticipation, Mackay opened the ledger and read...

The Cave of Requirement

*If you are reading this, congratulations – you are the chosen one/ones.
The Cave of Requirement is sought by many but entered by few.*

The rules of the cave are simple:

- 1. Only the chosen may enter.*
- 2. Choose well and all your wildest dreams will come true.*
- 3. Choose 2, leave one.*
- 4. Live by the choices you make.*

Are you ready for fame, fortune and fantasy?

Tentatively, Mackay turned the page. Before him, staining the pages in red ink, were the names that haunted him.

4th July 1978: Tash Roberts, Jemima Plack, Rajni Bhan (map and key)

13th July 1978: Millie and Mollie Cooper (map and torch)

21st July 1978: Bran Slater (key and torch)

But it was the final name that left him feeling paralysed.

11th August 1978: Seth Mackay (items still to be chosen)

"There's more Serg. You'd better see this." Sergeant Jones beckoned the DCI towards the cliff where a group of officers had gathered. Mackay followed like a basset hound pursuing a scent. The reality of the situation was becoming clear: he was close, very close.

Parting the officers, Jones led the Chief Inspector to the rock face. There, glistening in the fading sun, was a brass plaque, bolted into the stone. Upon it were etched thirteen harrowing words:

Welcome, Seth Mackay,
to The Cave of Requirement.
Are you ready to play?

Mackay stared in bewilderment at the sign as hundreds of questions spiralled in his mind.



★ What key information have we now discovered? Jot down all of the clues, including names, dates and any other important information, and add it to your timeline.

Vocabulary

Let's pause here and revisit some of the vocabulary we have been introduced in the text so far. Below is a 'never heard the word' grid. Have a look at the words and phrases I have chosen and assess your understanding by ticking and annotating the relevant box. If you know the word, please jot down a definition in your own words.

Word or phrase	Never heard of it	Heard of it but not sure of meaning	Heard of it and here is a definition/explanation of what it means
strewn			
tainted			
heartfelt plea			
flounder			
fuelled			
a charged voice			
ledger			
filled with anticipation			
sought			
etched			
harrowing			
bewilderment			

- ★ If there are any words that you do not fully understand, look them up and add them, along with their definition, into your jotter or magpie book. Challenge yourself to try to use these words in your own story to expand your own vocabulary knowledge.

Comprehension

We are now going to revisit the story and try to dig a little deeper in terms of our understanding. You are soon going to be presented with a decision to make – a dilemma that will affect the outcome of the story. To help you make the right choice, I want you to try to see the story through the eyes of DCI Seth Johnson. Let's go back and look through the evidence.

Evidence 1:

DCI Seth Mackay trawled the piles of The Cornish Times that lay strewn across his desk, months of bad news that tainted his ambition. There had to be a clue somewhere and he had to be the one to crack the case. Sinking into his chair, he reread the headlines that plagued him.

- ★ What is your impression of DCI Seth Mackay from the opening paragraph? What led you to this opinion?

Evidence 2:

As he pulled up at Hayle Bay, Seth Mackay was thankful that it was getting late – the bay would be quiet. The recent public pressure was becoming more than he could bear and he needed time to think.

- ★ Why has the author revealed this to the reader? Does this alter your perception of him in any way and, if so, how?

Evidence 3:

A sense of relief flooded through Ryan Jones at the sight of his boss. Thrusting the ledger forward into Mackay's hands, he felt as though the weight of the world had been lifted from his shoulders.

Mackay stared at the black book as confusion momentarily blinded him.

★ How has the author built the tension in this extract? How does the choice of language enhance this? Make reference to specific examples in the text in your answer.

Evidence 4:

But it was the final name that left him feeling paralysed.

Evidence 5:

Mackay followed like a basset hound pursuing a scent. The reality of the situation was becoming clear: he was close, very close.

★ Within a few lines, the author shows two very different sides to DCI Mackay's character. What does evidence 4 and 5 suggest to you about how he is feeling at this point in the story?

Evidence 6:

Mackay stared in bewilderment at the sign as hundreds of questions spiralled in his mind.

★ Based on what we have found out about Mackay so far, what questions do you imagine are spiralling in his mind at the point where we left him? Which question do you think is the most significant and why?

Now, let's continue the story ...

Mackay stared in bewilderment at the sign as hundreds of questions spiralled in his mind. Where was the cave? Ready to play what? What did this all mean? As if in anticipation of these questions, the ledger began to pulsate. Tentatively, Mackay opened the book and read the words that were forming on the page before his very eyes.

Seth has been chosen - he's ready to play.
The cave soon will open - he'll be on his way.
But first there's a choice, from three to two;
Choose wisely, Dear Seth, it's up to you.

A wise choice will see you capitalise
On all that you dream - the truth is your prize;
Choose two of the three - what will you take?
Remember you live by the choices you make!

The torch that illuminates the darkness;
The map that acts as your guide;
The key that unlocks the treasure;
Which two of the three will you decide?

I await your decision ...

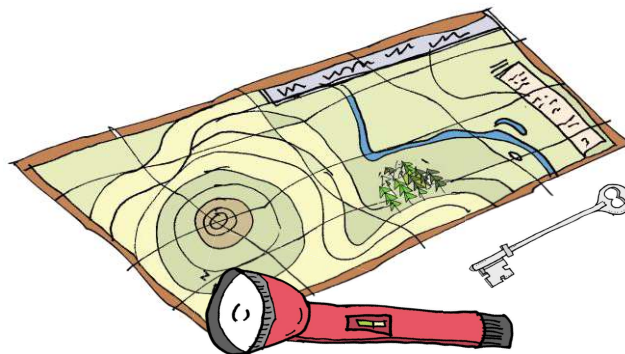
As the barrage of questions re-entered Mackay's mind, an unexpected steely determination surged from within. Here he stood, faced with the truth he had craved, the truth he lived and breathed for. Whatever trickery this was that was slowly unfolding before him, the reward was the simple truth: the whereabouts of the six innocent victims that had been snatched by this monster. All he had to do was make the choice - which two of the three should he choose?



★ **What key information have we now discovered? Jot down all of the clues, including names, dates and any other important information, and add it to your timeline.**

This is where you get to choose what happens next in the story. The choice that you make will determine Mackay's fate. Once you have chosen, jump to the page as directed and complete the story you have chosen. Remember, the story lives by the choices that you make!

- **Choice 1: Mackay chooses the map and key – turn to page 15**
- **Choice 2: Mackay chooses the map and torch – turn to page 17**
- **Choice 3: Mackay chooses the key and torch – turn to page 19**

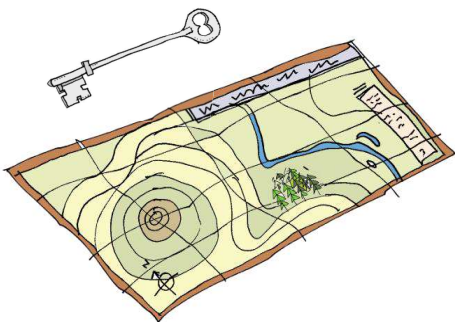


Only continue reading this if you have chosen choice 1: You can listen to this being read aloud here: <https://soundcloud.com/talkforwriting/cave-one/>

Choice 1: Mackay chooses the map and key

Mackay withdrew the Parker pen from his jacket pocket, removed the lid and rested the nib upon the page. As he wrote, the ink turned from black to red. He stared at the words that stained the page before him:

I choose the map and the key.



Almost in a trance, he slid the lid back on the pen and, as it clicked into place, his world plunged into darkness.

Mackay stood as still as stone. In the blink of an eye, the world around him had disappeared, replaced by a shadowed sea that swallowed all signs of life. Reaching out in front of him, he felt instantly disorientated, his mind spiralling uncontrollably. He felt like he was falling into the abyss, never to be seen again. Bile rose from deep within him and stung the back of his throat with a malevolent swipe. As the terror grew, pain took hold of him and contorted his insides. Mackay screamed and collapsed on the cold floor.

As he landed in a heap, he heard something crumple beneath him - the map! In desperation, he clawed at the stone floor, searching for his only hope. He had known that the map had to be the right choice; the prophecy had said it would act as his guide. The key also promised to unlock the treasure - the truth that he so craved - and they were both somewhere here, within his grasp.

Hours passed and the fight within Mackay faded. Broken and alone, he curled into a ball and cried, tears tumbling to the ground. Had he really made such a poor choice? All he dreamed of was the truth, of healing the world of wrongdoing. Why was he suffering so?

Then, a voice pierced the darkness:

"The truth you crave and shall receive,
You've lived their sins - you must believe,
The outcome of this little tale
Is that three sinners go to jail.

"So back we go, the 4th of July,
I snatched three souls, I shan't deny,
Their guilt was greed, they robbed and stole,
Each sold to me their precious soul.

"They chose the map that guides the way,
The key to free the hoards they crave,
But without light, their mission failed,
To learn their wrongs, they have been jailed.

"The opposite of their sin is starkness,
So, I filled their world with darkness,
For souls that fuel themselves with greed,
Must be punished and never freed."

Silence swallowed the voice and Mackay was one again all alone. Suddenly, a blinding light severed the dark, illuminating a desk in the middle of the room. Mackay shielded his eyes from the searing pain that seemed to blister beneath his eyelids. As the light softened, the penny dropped: this was not any desk - it was his desk, in his office. The same piles of newspaper that had tortured him lay strewn across it, but there was a new addition.

Staggering to the table, Mackay let his eyes fall upon the crisp copy of tomorrow's Cornish Times. As he read the headline, tears welled in his eyes. It couldn't be...

Now turn to page 21.

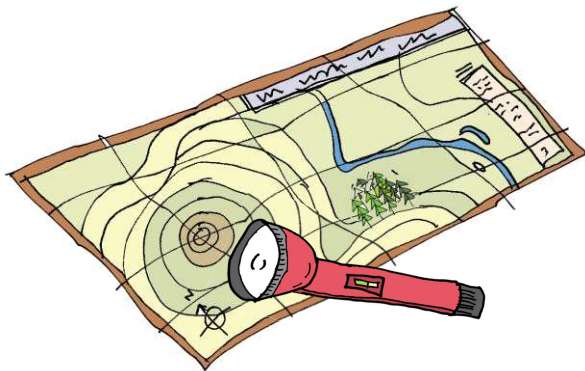
Only continue reading this if you have chosen choice 2: You can listen to this being read aloud here: <https://soundcloud.com/talkforwriting/cave-two/>

Choice 2: Mackay chooses the map and torch

Mackay withdrew the Parker pen from his jacket pocket, removed the lid and rested the nib upon the page. As he wrote, the ink turned from black to red. He stared at the words that stained the page

before him:

I choose the map and the torch.



Almost in a trance, he slid the lid back on the pen and, as it clicked into place, his world plunged into darkness.

Mackay flicked the switch on the torch that he held firmly in his hand and the stone chamber instantly filled with light. Where it had come from, he didn't know but he was thankful he had chosen it as the darkness was relentless. An instant sense of dread surged through him - what was he doing and where was he?

Shining the torch around the chamber, he saw a scroll, lying at his feet - the map! Holding the torch between his teeth, he unrolled the scroll and froze - it seemed to be a complex labyrinth of tunnels. Thank God he had chosen the map! He had known it had to be the right choice; the prophecy had said it would act as his guide. Soon, the truth that he so craved would be his.

For hours Mackay searched the labyrinth, always befalling the same fate - a locked door. No matter what course he took, he always ended up face to face with the same barrier. Broken and alone, he curled into a ball and cried, tears tumbling to the ground. Had he really made such a poor choice? All he dreamed of was the truth, of healing the world of wrongdoing. Why was he suffering so?

Then, a voice pierced the darkness:

"The truth you crave and shall receive,
You've lived their sins - you must believe,
The outcome of this little quest
Is now two sinners know what's best.

"So back we go, the 13th of July,
I snatched two souls, I shan't deny,
Their guilt was intrigue, they pried and stole,
Each sold to me their precious soul.

"They chose the torch so they could pry,
The map to guide so they could spy,
But without a key, they were locked in,
Now face to face with their own sin.

"The opposite of their sin is truth,
A vital lesson to instil in youth,
For souls that fuel themselves with lies,
Will soon be hated and despised."

Silence swallowed the voice and Mackay was once again all alone. Suddenly, the locked door in front of him clicked and swung open, revealing a desk in the middle of a room. Mackay looked all around him to see who had freed him from his nightmare but there was no sign of anyone. As he stepped through the door, the penny dropped: this was not any desk - it was his desk, in his office. The same piles of newspaper that had tortured him lay strewn across it but there was a new addition.

Staggering to the table, Mackay let his eyes fall upon the crisp copy of tomorrow's Cornish Times. As he read the headline, tears welled in his eyes. It couldn't be ...

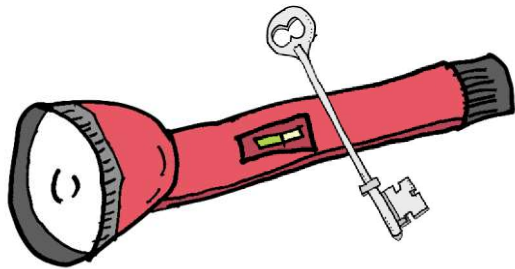
Now turn to page 21.

Only continue reading this if you have chosen choice 3. You can listen to this being read aloud here: <https://soundcloud.com/talkforwriting/cave-three/>

Choice 3: Mackay chooses the key and torch

Mackay withdrew the Parker pen from his jacket pocket, removed the lid and rested the nib upon the page. As he wrote, the ink turned from black to red. He stared at the words that stained the page

before him:



I choose the key and the torch.

Almost in a trance, he slid the lid back on the pen and, as it clicked into place, his world plunged into darkness.

Mackay flicked the switch on the torch that he held firmly in his hand and the stone chamber instantly filled with light. Where it had come from, he didn't know but he was thankful he had chosen it as the darkness was relentless. An instant sense of dread surged through him - what was he doing and where was he?

Shining the torch around the chamber, he saw something glimmering in the shadowed corners - the key! As he picked it up, he felt an icy chill tear through his body. The key was shaped like a skeleton, with many tiny cogs whirring inside. This was clearly designed, as the prophecy had promised, to unlock the greatest of treasure. Thank God he had chosen it! Soon, the truth that he so craved would be his.

For hours, Mackay walked aimlessly along passageways flanked by towering walls. No matter which way he turned, the labyrinth, always befalling the same fate - another vacant aisle. No matter what course he took, he always ended up seemingly where he had started. Broken and alone, he curled into a ball and cried, tears tumbling to the ground. Had he really made such a poor choice? All he dreamed of was the truth, of healing the world of wrongdoing. Why was he suffering so?

Then, a voice pierced the darkness:

"The truth you crave and shall receive,
You've lived his sin - you must believe,
The outcome of this futile course
Is that a sinner shall feel remorse.

"So back we go, the 21st of July,
I snatched one soul, I shan't deny,
His guilt was hatred; happiness he stole,
So, from him I took his precious soul.

"He chose the torch so he could see,
The key to set the secrets free,
But without a map, he had no guide,
And learnt how solitude eats from inside.

"The opposite of his sin is compassion,
A quality in youth that's out of fashion,
For souls that fuel themselves with spite,
Should become lost in the blackest night."

Silence swallowed the voice and Mackay was once again all alone. But the corridor in front of him was no longer vacant; there was a door. Slipping the key into the lock, Mackay took a deep breath. Turning the skeletal key, he heard the click - the door opened, revealing a desk in the middle of a room. Mackay looked all around him to see who had freed him from his nightmare but there was no sign of anyone. As he stepped through the door, the penny dropped: this was not any desk - it was his desk, in his office. The same piles of newspaper that had tortured him lay strewn across it but there was a new addition.

Staggering to the table, Mackay let his eyes fall upon the crisp copy of tomorrow's Cornish Times. As he read the headline, tears welled in his eyes. It couldn't be...

Now turn to page 21.



What key information have we now discovered? Jot down all of the clues, including names, dates and any other important information, and add it to your timeline.

Short-burst Writing

It's now your turn to be an author. In response to the story you chose, and using the clues and evidence you have gathered, what do think was printed on the front of *The Cornish Times*?

★ Write the headline and opening paragraph of the newspaper Mackay found on his desk. You may like to carry on and write the whole article. If so, the following boxed-up structure will help.

Introduce the story with a headline and an opening sentence that grabs the reader's interest, including:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Why?
- Where?

Add in more detail about the story - elaborate on the key events.

Add in a quote from a character central to the story. You could also include a quote from a professional source, such as the Chief of Police.

Conclude the article with a rounding off statement, possibly alluding to what may happen in the future.

Initial Response

Now you have read the whole story (or at least one version of it), take a moment to reflect on how it made you feel as a reader. You may like to go back and re-read the story you chose as a whole.

★ **In your jotter, write down your initial responses to the story. You may like to reflect on some of the following elements:**

- what you enjoyed or disliked
- what puzzled and intrigued you
- what unanswered questions you still have
- how the story made you feel
- what other stories it may have reminded you of
- what themes lie at the heart of the story
- what morals there are to be learned

A story with choices

Before we look at how to write a mystery story of this style, it is important that you read and reflect on all of the stories that were on offer.

★ **Go back and read the alternative two endings. Reflect on how they are different and how the author has adapted the chain of events based on the choices Mackay made. You may like to reflect on the table below that shows the sins of the characters, tracked through to the end of each story.**

Person	Three teenagers	Millie & Molly	Missing person
Date missing	4 th July, 1978	13 th July, 1978	21 st July, 1978
Sin / flaw	greedy	nosy/thieving	mean
Objects chosen	map and key	map and torch	key and torch
Fate	able to find and unlock the prize but unable to see it	able to find and see the prize but unable to obtain it	able to see and obtain the prize but unable to find it
Lesson to learn	generosity	truth	compassion

★ **In your opinion, what was DCI Mackay's sin/flaw? What was his fate? What did he learn?**

★ Identifying the Toolkit - building suspense



To be able to write a story rich in mystery that grips the reader, you need to have a number of suspense tools at your fingertips. Below is a list of suspense tools that are prominent in *The Cave of Requirement*.

Suspense Toolkit

- reveal how the character feels through their actions
- use short punchy sentences to intensify the drama
- use empty words to hide the threat
- personify the setting to make it sound dangerous
- use the weather and/or time of day to create atmosphere
- make your character hear, see, touch, smell or sense something ominous
- surprise the reader with the unexpected
- suggest something is about to happen
- reveal the character's thoughts

★ Go back through the story and highlight all the suspense tools you can find. You may like to jot some of these down in your magpie book so that you can use them in your own writing.

★ Raid other stories and novels and add examples to your magpie book. Remember, great writers take inspiration from their reading.

Boxing up and planning a mystery story

At the heart of *The Cave of Requirement* is a Wishing tale. Nearly all Wishing tales follow a similar pattern:

- | |
|--|
| • Main character (MC) wants something badly |
| • MC decides to try to get it and works out a plan of action |
| • MC is prevented by some sort of difficulty |
| • MC eventually gets what they wanted |
| • MC reflects on whether it was all worth it |

To manipulate this and create a Mystery story, I just played around with the middle of the tale. My plan looks more like this:

• Main character (MC) wants something badly
• MC offered a way to achieve it/a sign of hope
• MC is prevented by some sort of difficulty and given choices
• MC goes on a journey
• MC reflects on whether it was all worth it

Once you have identified the pattern of the story, the possibilities are endless. Let your imagination run free. Brainstorm lots of ideas and then decide which captures your interest as a writer.

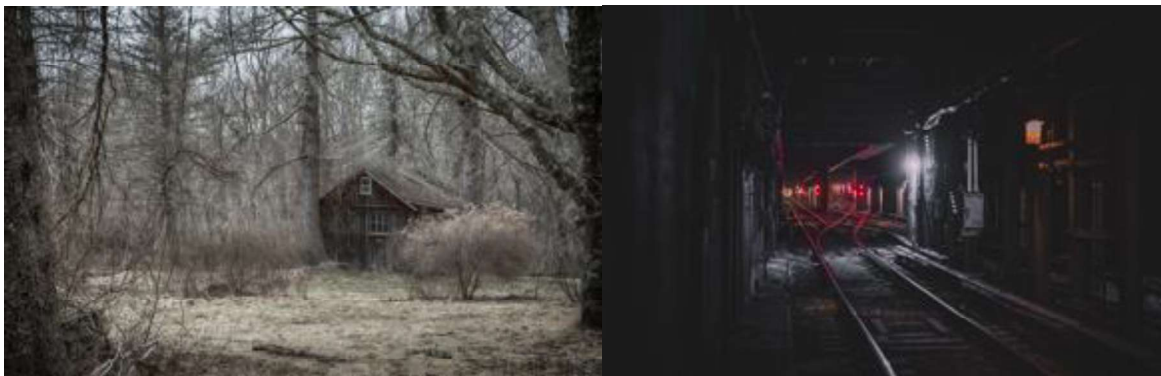
My recommendation when planning this type of story is to initially just write one pathway all the way through. Then go back and decide where the point is in the story where an alternative path could be explored and add this in.

Here are a couple of ideas to open your mind to the world of possibility:

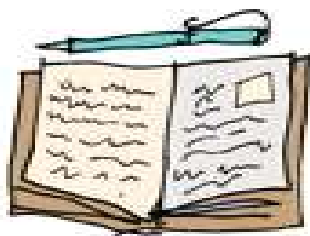
Underlying Pattern	Story idea 1	Story idea 2
Main character (MC) wants something badly	Sid, a renowned jewel thief, wants to defy all the odds and steal the crown jewels.	Mai is a soldier in the war and wants to be noticed so that she can rise through the ranks.
MC offered a way to achieve it / a sign of hope	Reads in the paper that the Queen will be parading the jewels at a gala event.	She is told by a senior officer to plant some evidence on another soldier, for which she will be rewarded.
MC is prevented by some sort of difficulty (and given choices)	Security is going to be tight. Sid hacks into his best friend's computer and obtains the information he needs. *	Mai is caught in the act by a fellow officer, Rayan, who threatens to rat her out. Mai has to decide how to deal with the situation. *
MC goes on a journey	Sid, manages to infiltrate the security measures and steal the jewels.	At the last moment, Mai decides not to carry out the planting of evidence.
MC reflects on whether it was all worth it	Sid's friend is fired for the breach in security and never forgives Sid. Sid has jewels but has lost friend.	Mai is condemned by the senior officer but has built respect with Rayan.

* This is the point where the character has options. Once you have written the story, you could go back to this point and explore how the story may have unfolded should the character have chosen differently.

★ Using the underlying pattern above, plan a few mystery stories of your own. You may like to draw upon your own personal experience as well as your wider reading and imagination. I have also included two pictures as food for thought. I set my mystery story in a magical cave – where could yours be set?



Writing your own mystery story



You now have all of the tools required to write your own mystery story. You may choose to stick to the more conventional single pathway, or try writing a story with multiple endings or journeys. Whatever you decide, reflect on all of the skills we have discussed throughout this unit and see if you can intertwine them within your writing.

To recap on all the key points we have learned:

- a. **Blend writing styles by including newspaper articles either linked to the key events in the story or to the main character.** You may like to begin these, as I did, or intersperse them throughout the story. After all, a bank robber on the run would definitely keep an eye on the headlines!
- b. **Keep your reader guessing and build the suspense.** A good mystery story does not give too much away too quickly. Make sure you plan the story well and then drip feed clues and key pieces of information as the story unfolds. It helps to try to see the story through the main character as this helps the reader engage and immerse themselves in the story.

- c. **Draw upon the suspense toolkit.** Keep referring to the suspense toolkit and try out new ideas. Raid your reading to see how other authors do this and magpie great ideas.
- d. **Enjoy it.** Writing is all about sharing a passion for words, stories and the world of possibility. If you love the story you are writing – so will your reader.

★ **Now write your mystery story, drawing on all that you have learned. Don't forget to share or publish your work – great writing deserves an audience! I would love to read any of your finished, published work!**

Extension Tasks: Other Writing Opportunities

When I began to think about the writing opportunities that surround this story, they were endless. If you have enjoyed the story and this style of writing, you may like to consider having a go at some of these extension tasks:

★ Newspaper Articles

There are a number of newspaper headlines and openings in this story. Choose any of these and complete the article. Refer back to the boxed-up pattern shared earlier.

★ Prequels

Before DCI Mackay entered The Room of Requirement, six others had previously entered. Each of them has a story to tell. Go back and write their stories about their own entrance into the cave and experience once inside.

★ Sequels

The story leaves the reader to decide what is on the newspaper on Mackay's desk and also what happens next. Have a go at continuing the story – does Mackay crack the case?

★ Diaries

Write a series of diary entries as 'the voice'. Reveal the menace that drives this mysterious character and how the plot was conjured and carried out.

★ The Cave of Requirement

Create your own magical/ mystical setting. Download and read James Walker's Y6 home-workbook that explores the poetry activity 'City of Silence'.

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Jamie Thomas, Deputy Head and Head of Warren Teaching School Alliance, now works with Talk for Writing to help schools develop the approach.

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