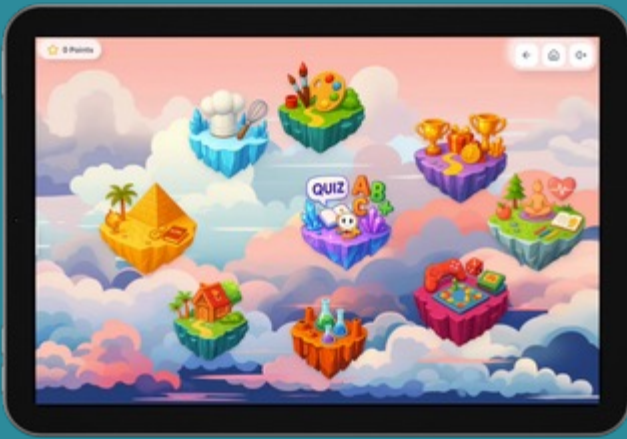


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Plot Tension: Questions and Payoffs - Year 4

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How clues become payoffs

A clue gives the reader a question.



An obstacle changes what the character can do.



A payoff answers an earlier question using clues already shown.

WORDS

Only **LIGHT...** showed on the box.



What could be inside?

IMAGE

A blue ribbon peeks from the box lid.



What does it suggest?

CONTRAST

An open box shows the lighthouse immediately.



The question ends sooner.

The lighthouse before opening — part 1 of 3

At eight o'clock, the school hall was almost ready for the inventions exhibition. Leila checked the display cards while her friend Arun carried a box of spare clips. Their class had built a lighthouse with a tiny lamp that flashed when someone turned a paper handle. The lighthouse belonged on the front table. In its place lay a circle of dust and one loose blue ribbon. Leila remembered tying that ribbon around the model's base so visitors could spot it from the doorway. The table card still said "Our Working Lighthouse." If a visitor arrived now, the card would point to an empty space. She set down her pencil and asked Arun to help her look.

"The doors open in an hour," said Arun. Leila looked beneath the table. No lighthouse. She looked behind the folding screen. Still nothing. Above the empty space, a window rattled in the wind. A drop of water landed on the tablecloth. The cloth was damp near the window, but the floor was dry.

The lighthouse before opening — part 2 of 3

Mr Chen, the caretaker, walked past with a ladder. "Is everything ready?" he asked. Before Leila could answer, the hall lights flickered. Mr Chen hurried towards the switchboard. Leila noticed a broad cardboard box beside the stage curtain. Only the first letters on its label showed: LIGHT... The rest was hidden by a rolled poster. A corner of blue ribbon peeked from beneath its lid. She wondered whether someone had packed the lighthouse away, but she could not see inside.

Leila followed the damp tablecloth with her eyes. A fine track crossed the window frame. Water had probably slipped through during the night's rain. "Perhaps the model got wet," she said. Arun pointed out that the cloth was damp only where the lighthouse had stood. That made the empty circle seem less like a mistake and more like a careful move. Yet who had moved it, and where?

The lighthouse before opening — part 3 of 3

They carried the other displays away from the window. Mr Chen returned with a cloth and explained that he had seen the leak at seven. He had put the lighthouse somewhere dry while he fetched the ladder. At that moment the stage curtain shifted. Leila saw the whole label: LIGHTHOUSE — HANDLE WITH CARE. Mr Chen lifted the lid. Inside, the model rested on tissue paper, its blue ribbon tied safely around the base.

"I meant to leave you a note," he said, "but the lights needed attention first. Alan tested the paper handle. The lamp flashed once, then twice. Leila moved the front table away from the window and placed the lighthouse where visitors could see it. When the doors opened, the model was ready. Leila glanced at the dry tablecloth and the labelled box. The clues had been there before the answer was.

An earlier answer — part 1 of 2

At eight o'clock, the school hall was almost ready for the inventions exhibition. Leila checked the display cards while Arun carried a box of spare clips. Their class had built a lighthouse with a tiny lamp. It should have been on the front table. In its place lay a circle of dust and one loose blue ribbon.

Leila looked beneath the table. No lighthouse. Arun looked behind the folding screen. Then Mr Chen, the caretaker, walked past with a ladder. "I moved your lighthouse into the box beside the stage," he said. "The window leaked during the night, and I wanted to keep the model dry. I'll help you move the table when I've checked the lights." He pointed to a broad cardboard box with a label partly covered by a rolled poster. Its blue ribbon showed beneath the lid.

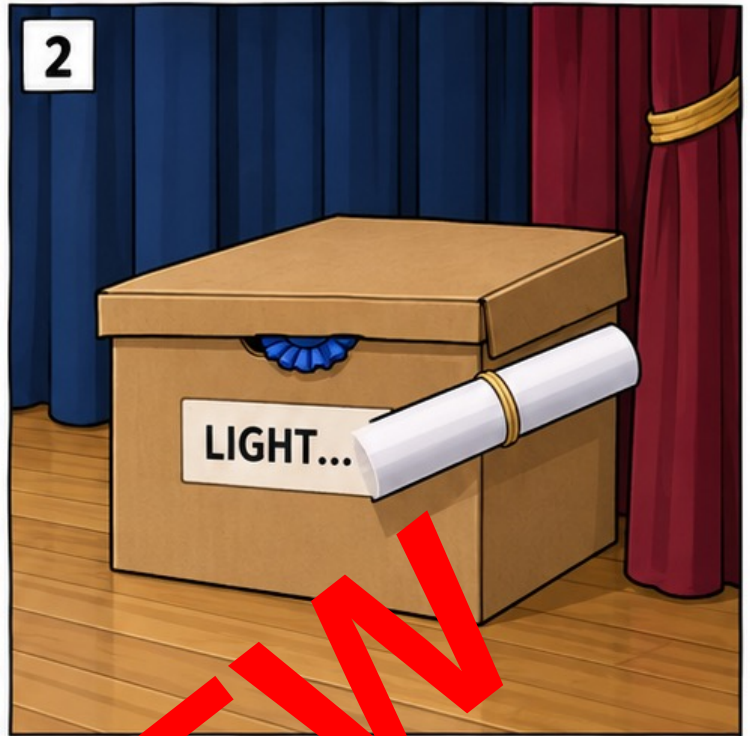
An earlier answer — part 2 of 2

“Thank you,” said Leila. She lifted the box lid a little. The model rested safely on tissue paper. Its paper handle had not bent. Mr Chen went to the switchboard because the lights had flickered. Leila and Arun carried the other displays away from the damp window. A drop of water landed where the lighthouse had stood, and a fine crack showed in the window frame. The dry floor told them that the leak had started recently.

The friends moved the front table towards the middle of the hall. Arun asked whether the lamp still worked. Leila turned the paper handle, but it caught on a fold in the tissue. She loosened the tissue and tried again. The lamp flashed once, then twice. Mr Chen returned with a cloth to wipe the table. He said he had noticed the leak at seven and had planned to leave a note after fetching the ladder.

When the doors opened, the lighthouse stood safely on a dry table. Visitors leaned close to see its little lamp flash. Leila was pleased that they had solved the practical problem before the exhibition began. The same events happened as in the delayed version: a leak, a careful move, a brief search and a safe display. The reader learns what the box holds much earlier, so the question about the lighthouse ends sooner. The small question about whether the lamp will work remains until the handle turns.

Four pictures, one fair answer



If panel 4 comes immediately after panel 1, what happens to the reader's question?

Words, pictures and reader questions



**A. "Only LIGHT... showed."
What can a reader infer?**

**B. A blue ribbon shows
under the lid. What visual
clue is this?**

**C. The damaged cloth and crack
appear before Mr Chen
explains the move. Why does
this make the payoff fair?**

**D. Compare opening the box
early with opening it late.
Which reader question ends
sooner?**

Name: _____

Reader question timeline — guided

For each answer, write one detail and one effect on the reader.

1. **MODEL:** Empty stand + blue ribbon. Reader asks: Where is the lighthouse?

Detail: _____

Effect on reader: _____

2. "LIGHT..." appears on a partly hidden label. What might this suggest?

Detail: _____

Effect on reader: _____

3. Damp cloth appears by cracked window. How does this change your guess?

Detail: _____

Effect on reader: _____

4. Mr Chen opens the labelled box. Which earlier clues does this answer?

Detail: _____

Effect on reader: _____

Name: **ANSWERS**

Reader question timeline — guided

For each answer, write one detail and one effect on the reader.

1. **MODEL:** Empty stand + blue ribbon. Reader asks: Where is the lighthouse?

Detail: **The stand is empty; the blue ribbon remains.**

Effect on reader: **We wonder where the lighthouse went.**

2. “LIGHT...” appears on a partly hidden label. What might this suggest?

Detail: **Only LIGHT... is visible on the label.**

Effect on reader: **We suspect the box but cannot be sure.**

3. Damp cloth appears by cracked window. How does this change your guess?

Detail: **The cloth is damp near the cracked window.**

Effect on reader: **A protective move becomes a likely explanation.**

4. Mr Chen opens the labelled box. Which earlier clues does this answer?

Detail: **The partial label and ribbon pointed to the box.**

Effect on reader: **Opening it confirms the clue chain and ends the question.**

Name: _____

Reader question timeline — core

For each moment, note what the reader knows, wonders and later learns.

Moment	What the reader knows	What the reader wonders	What the reader later learns
1. The stand is empty.			
2. A ribbon lies on the table.			
3. A label reads only LIGHT...			
4. Water lands on the cloth.			
5. Mr Chen carries a ladder.			
6. The box opens			

Then explain how delaying moment 6 changes the reading.

Name: ANSWERS

Reader question timeline — core

For each moment, note what the reader knows, wonders and later learns.

Moment	What the reader knows	What the reader wonders	What the reader later learns
1. The stand is empty.	Stand empty	Where is model?	Safe in box
2. A ribbon lies on the table.	Ribbon remains	Was it moved?	Ribbon tied to base
3. A label reads only LIGHT...	Label: LIGHT...	Lighthouse inside?	Full label confirms
4. Water lands on the cloth.	Cloth is wet	Was there a leak?	Caretaker saw leak
5. Mr Chen carries a ladder.	Mr Chen has ladder	Is he fixing leak?	He moved model first
6. The box opens	Box opens	Is model safe?	Yes, on tissue

Then explain how delaying moment 6 changes the reading.

Delaying the open-box moment keeps the location question alive while the ribbon, label and leak make the answer fair.

Name: _____

Reader question timeline — transfer

Plot Tension: Questions and Payoffs — Year 4

Read *The garden map*.

1. What does the green paper corner make a reader wonder? Give the detail and your inference.

2. How does the partly visible tube affect the timing of the answer? Explain.

3. Why does Jo's explanation fit the earlier clues? Name two details.

Name: ANSWERS

Reader question timeline — transfer

Plot Tension: Questions and Payoffs — Year 4

Read *The garden map*.

1. What does the green paper corner make a reader wonder? Give the detail and your inference.

The green paper corner suggests the missing map may still be nearby.

It does not prove where.

2. How does the partly visible tube affect the timing of the answer? Explain.

The tube hints at a place to look but its contents stay hidden until Jo returns.

The question lasts longer.

3. Why does Jo's explanation fit the earlier clues? Name two details.

The green corner and partly visible tube prepare the explanation that Jo

rolled the map to keep it safe from rain.

Pacing editor — how to play

1. Work with a partner.
2. Take one challenge card.
3. The card gives four moments in mixed order. Put them in an order that gives a fair clue before the answer.
4. Explain: "This detail makes the reader wonder ____; the later reveal answers because ____."
5. Your partner checks the teacher key. Swap roles.
6. Finish when each partner has explained three choices.

WORKED TURN

Empty stand → partial LIGHT... label → damp cloth → open box.

The partial label and damp cloth prepare the answer.

WRONG CHOICE

Open box first. This gives away the location before clues can build a question.

Pacing editor — cards 1-6

1



- Open box



- Empty stand



- Partial LIGHT... label



- Blue ribbon on table.

2



- Caretaker explains safe move



- Cracked window



- Damp cloth



- Caretaker with ladder.

3



- Map unrolled



- Green paper corner



- Jojo's



- Closed tube.

4



- Poster rehung



- Tape scrap



- Missing poster



- Rolled poster behind screen.

5



- Lamp flashes



- Handle caught



- Model lamp dark



- Tissue removed.

6



- Gardener explains move



- Plant on dry sill



- Wet floor



- Empty plant shelf.

Pacing editor – cards 7–12

7



- Medal safe in case
- Velvet case edge
- Coach arrives
- Empty medal display.

8



- Recipe card found
- Floury corner
- Closed folder
- Missing recipe card.

9



- Kite recovered
- String on table
- Storage tube
- Kite absent.

10



- Key found
- Pencil mark
- Folded sheet
- Missing map key.

11



- Item returned
- Blue ribbon
- Labelled cupboard
- Empty display hook.

12



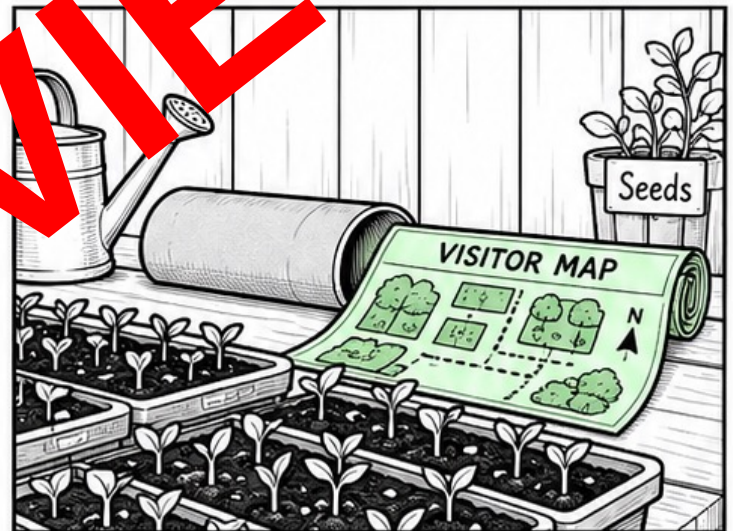
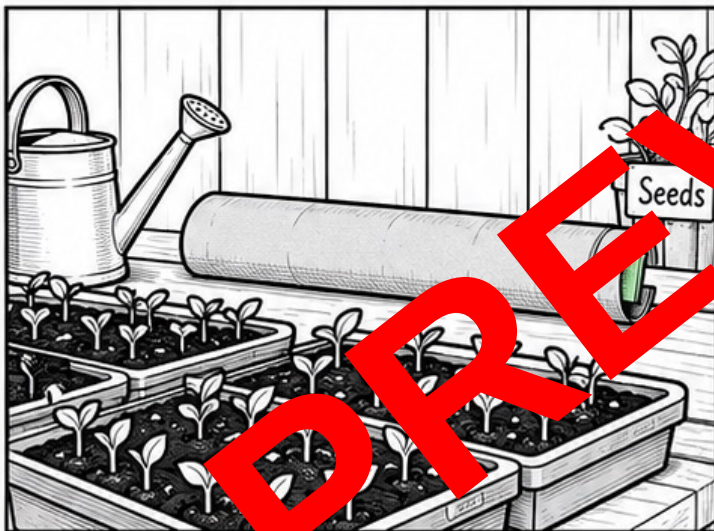
- Vane safe
- Orange tag
- Partly open cupboard
- Missing weather vane.

The garden map — tension rehearsal

Mina arrived at the community garden to find the visitor map missing from its stand. Families would arrive at ten. A green paper corner lay beside the watering can. In the first drawing, a long tube rested behind the seed trays; only a strip of green paper showed at one end. Mina checked the shed, but its door was locked. She wondered if the wind had carried the map away.

The garden leader, Jo, returned with string. Overnight rain had loosened the map's frame. Jo had rolled the map and placed it in the tube to stop the paper from tearing while the frame dried. The second drawing shows the tube open and the green map inside. Mina unrolled the map and helped Jo fasten it to a dry board.

Mina smoothed the map's creases while Jo tightened the string. The first family came through the gate just as they finished. A child pointed to the vegetable beds on the map, then found the matching path between the trees. Mina put the watering can back and looked once more at the tube behind the seeds.



Name: _____

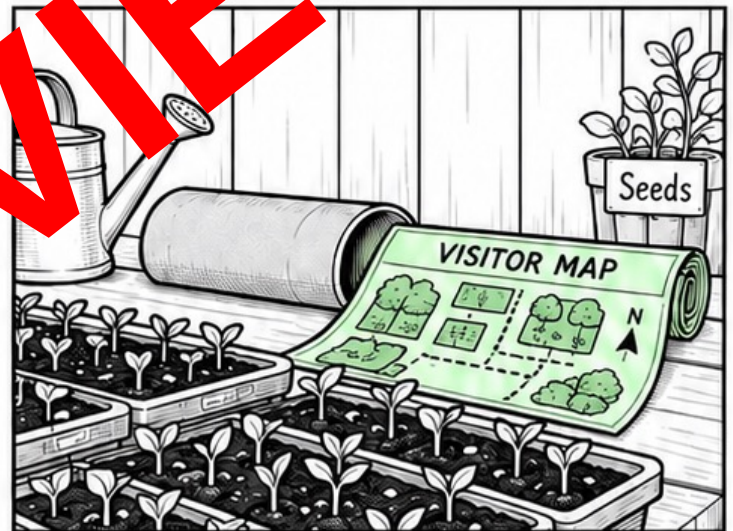
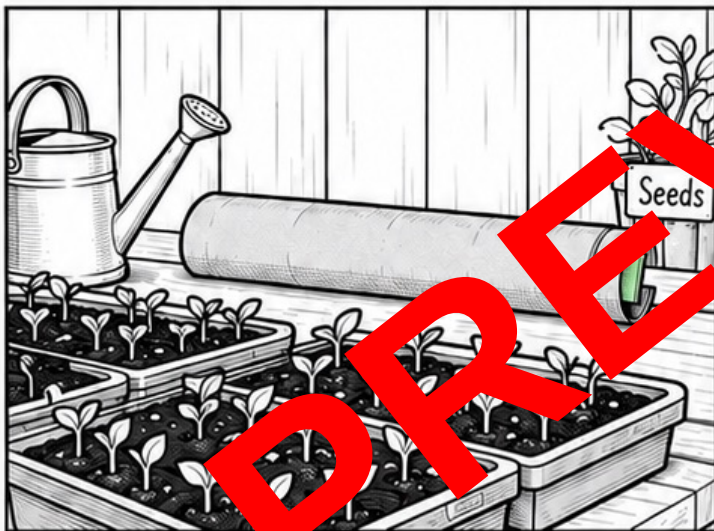
Which word clue comes first? Which pictured clue comes first? What question does each raise? How do Jo's words and the second picture pay these off?

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Name: **ANSWERS**

Which word clue comes first? Which pictured clue comes first? What question does each raise? How do Jo's words and the second picture pay these off?

The green paper corner is the first word clue.

The first picture shows a green strip at the closed tube.

Both make us wonder if the map is nearby.

Jo says she rolled it to protect it from rain.

The open-tube picture confirms the map is safe there.

Name: _____

Repair a weak explanation

Weak claim: The story is tense because the map is missing.

Repair it. Name one exact word or image detail, the reader question it raises, and how the later answer fits.

Describe a change to the first picture that would show the map is safe earlier.

Explain what question becomes shorter.



1. Repair the weak explanation.

2. Describe the picture change and explain the shorter question.

Name: ANSWERS

Repair a weak explanation

Weak claim: The story is tense because the map is missing.

Repair it. Name one exact word or image detail, the reader question it raises, and how the later answer fits.

Describe a change to the first picture that would show the map is safe earlier.

Explain what question becomes shorter.



1. Repair the weak explanation.

The green corner beside the watering can makes a reader wonder whether the missing map is still in the garden. Jo's later explanation and the open tube fit that visible clue.

2. Describe the picture change and explain the shorter question.

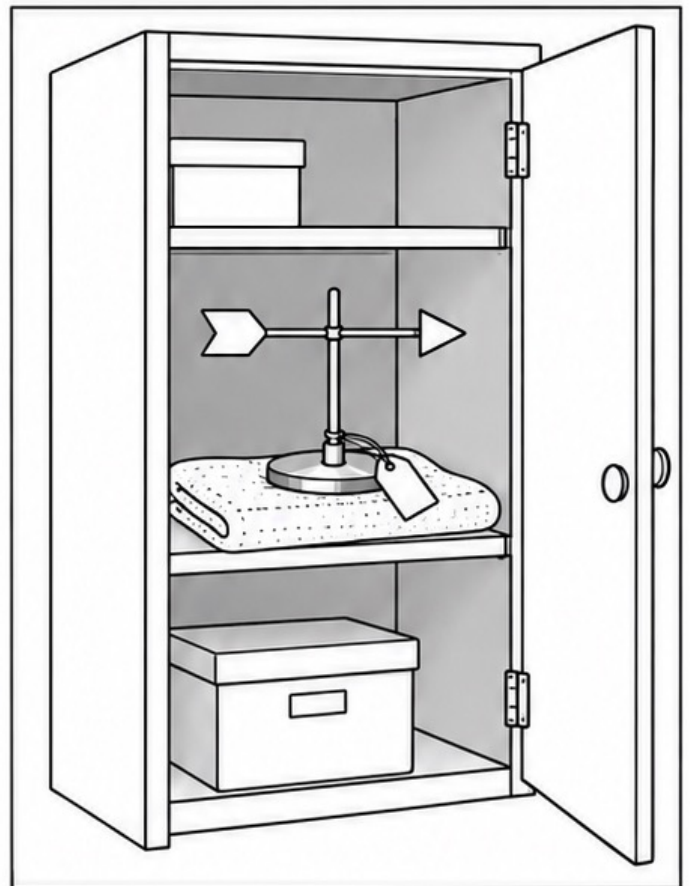
Show the whole green map inside the tube in Picture 1. Readers would know it was safe before Mina checked the shed, so the question about its location would end sooner.

The weather vane — assessment story

At nine, the class was ready to show its small weather vane at the community science morning. The display stand was empty. Beside it lay a loose orange tag. In the first picture, a tall cupboard door stands slightly open. Only the edge of a round metal base is visible. A card pinned to the door reads "Keep dry." Ravi looks at the empty stand and asks whether the vane has been taken outside.

Wind pushes rain through the open hall window. Ravi closes it and sees fresh drops on the stand. He remembers that the vane's paper arrows must stay dry. In the second picture, the cupboard door opens wide. The weather vane rests on a towel inside, with its orange tag tied to the base. Ms Bell explains that she moved it before the rain reached the stand, then went to fetch a cloth.

Ravi checks that the arrows still turn. He carries the vane to a dry table near the door, and the science morning begins. The first visitor stops to watch its paper arrows turn.



Name: _____

The weather vane — tension map

Use the assessment story and its two pictures. Record TWO exact word moments and TWO exact picture moments. For each, tell what the reader knows or wonders and how the timing keeps interest. Then explain why the ending fits the earlier clues.

Mode	Exact detail	Reader question or effect	Later payoff
Word 1			
Word 2			
Picture 1			
Picture 2			

Why is the ending fair?

Name: ANSWERS

The weather vane — tension map

Use the assessment story and its two pictures. Record TWO exact word moments and TWO exact picture moments. For each, tell what the reader knows or wonders and how the timing keeps interest. Then explain why the ending fits the earlier clues.

Mode	Exact detail	Reader question or effect	Later payoff
Word 1	Loose orange tag	Where did the vane go?	Tagged to safe vane
Word 2	Rain and paper arrows	Will the model get wet?	Mrs Bell moved it to stay dry
Picture 1	Partly open cupboard round base edge	Is it inside? Clue, not proof	Door later opens
Picture 2	Vane above orange tag	Location is confirmed	The earlier clue is answered

Why is the ending fair?

The tag, partly open cupboard, rain and paper arrows prepare the safe-move explanation. Revealing the vane later keeps the question open. Accept other supported readings.

Name: _____

Plot tension learning evidence

Criterion	Needs teaching	Developing with support	Target met independently
Concept/accuracy	Uses an inaccurate representation or only names a device.	Applies the idea to a familiar model with a prompt.	Applies clue, obstacle, reveal and payoff accurately to a fresh case.
Application/procedure	Cannot yet complete a meaningful tension map.	Maps some moments with a model or prompt.	Maps two exact word and two exact picture moments independently.
Reason/evidence	Gives a guess, opinion or device label only.	Names relevant details but needs a prompt to link effect.	Explains a reader question or effect with precise word and visual evidence.
Transfer/communication	Response is unclear or cannot transfer method.	Communicates with support; fresh case insecure.	Gives a coherent supported explanation in a fresh matched context.

Evidence observed:

Next step:

Plot Tension: Questions and Payoffs

Year 4 English





Our learning goal

Explain how a writer or illustrator gives readers a question, delays an answer and makes the payoff satisfying.

Look for evidence in both words and pictures.





Words for our thinking

A clue is a detail that raises a fair question.

An obstacle changes what a character can do.

Tension grows while the answer matters but is still uncertain.

A payoff answers an earlier question.



Model a clue and a payoff



Words: "Only LIGHT... showed on the board."

Picture: a blue ribbon peeks beneath the board.

Question: Could the missing knight have been on the side?

Payoff: the opened book confirms the guess and explains the move.





Read Story A: the opening

The exhibition table has a dust circle and a loose blue button.

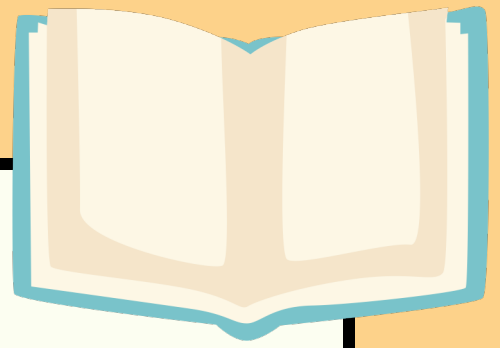
The lighthouse model is missing.

A damp cloth and a crack in the window add another problem.

What does Leila know? What does she only suspect?



Compare Story A & B



The caretaker opens the box early in Story B.

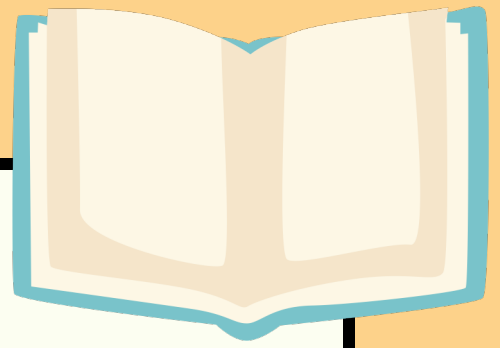
The missing-model question ends sooner.

Which version gives you longer to test the ribbon and label clues?

Both are clear; they create different reading experiences.



Think aloud with evidence



I see “LIGHT...” on a partly covered label and a shadow beneath the lid.

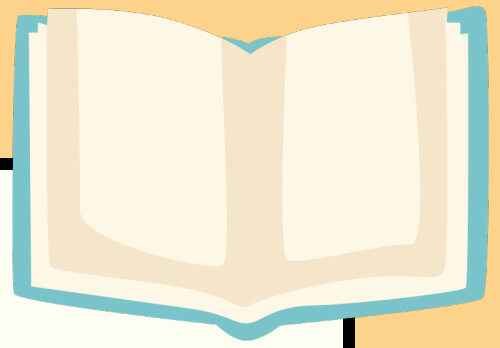
I infer that the lighthouse may be inside.

I cannot call it a fact until the lid opens.

What other explanations could all fit?



Check the inference



The box might hold the model. That is a supported guess, not proof.
When the lid opens, the earlier guesses connect to the answer.
A fair payoff helps the reader see which guesses mattered.



An obstacle changes the plan



Rain enters through a cracked window.
The model cannot safely stay on the display table.
Moving it protects the lamp, but Lena does not yet know where it went.
The obstacle gives the relay a reason.





Try the panel challenge

Choose the first panel: empty table, pot covered by open lid.
Which order gives a reader a full question?
Explain the moment the answer becomes certain.





Move one reveal

Move the open-lid panel earlier or later

What new question does a reveal ask?

Does the payoff still use an earlier choice?

Explain the change in the evidence-and-effect sentence.





Repair a weak answer

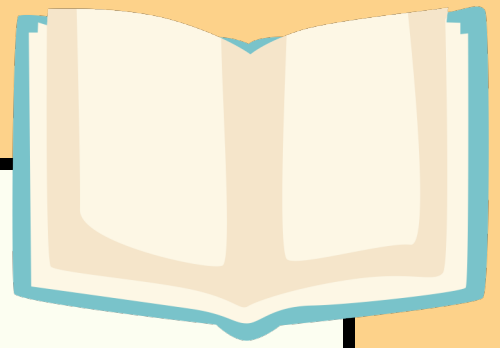
Weak: "It is suspenseful because there is a mystery."

Better: "The partial label makes me wonder whether the missing model is in the box; the later open lid answers that question."

Name the detail and its effect



Rehearse with the garden map



A green corner appears on a map; then someone is not in a tube.

What question can the image raise before the tube is opened?

Which later moment answers it?

Connect the clue, question and payoff.



Choose your challenge



Support: say a clue and use “This makes me wonder.”

Core: link one word clue and one visual clue to a payoff.

Extension: move a reveal and explain how the reader's experience changes.



Independent tension moment



Read the weather-station case.

Find two moments created by words and two created by pictures.

For each, name the evidence, reader's question and payoff or effect.

Do not treat a guess as a confirmed answer.





Check your explanation

Did you name two word moments and two precise moments?

Did each question grow from a visible or written line?

Did you explain what the letter payor answered?

Revise one vague sentence with a precise detail.





What authors and illustrators do

They choose when a reader notices a clue.

They choose how long a question stays open.

They make the answer clearer by connecting it to earlier evidence.

You can explain those choices with details.





Well done!
You can explain a clue and its
payoff.



PREFE

Plot Tension: Questions and Payoffs

Year 4 English



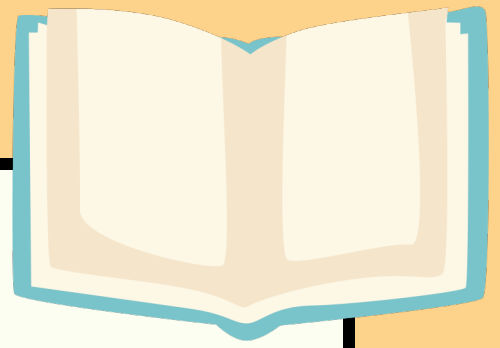


Q1 · Clue or answer?

A box label shows only “LIGHT...”. Is that a confirmed answer or a clue? Explain.



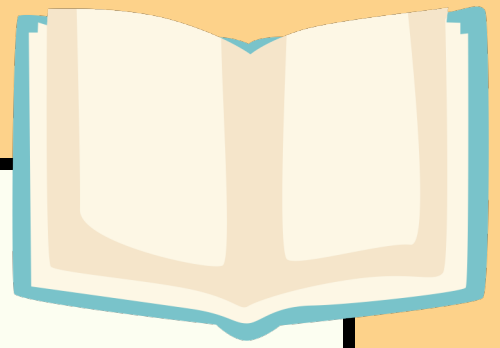
AI · Clue or answer?



It is a clue. The partial word suggests the missing light, but the closed lid leaves other possibilities.



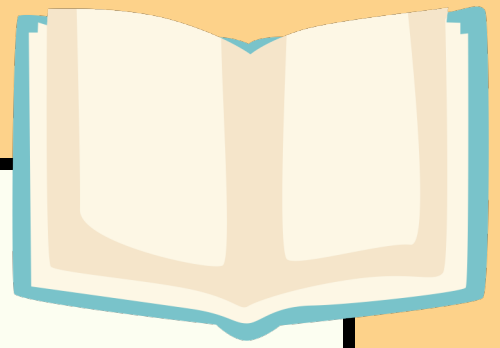
Q2 · Reveal timing



A story shows the open box in its first scene. What happens to the reader's question about the missing model?



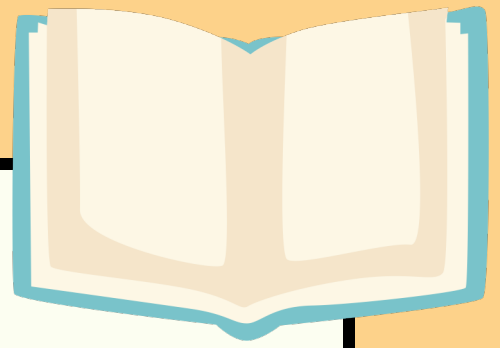
A2 · Reveal timing



The question ends earlier. A later reveal lets the reader see the label and ribbon clues for longer.



Q3 · A new cupboard case



A class poster is missing. A cupboard door is open, and a roll of blue paper
peeks out. What question could the reader ask?



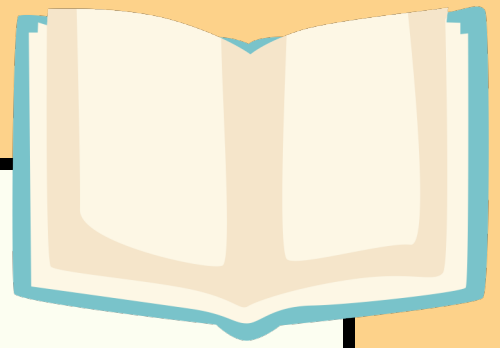
A3 · A new cupboard case



A fair question is whether the poster is. The cupboard case blue paper supports the idea but does not confirm it.



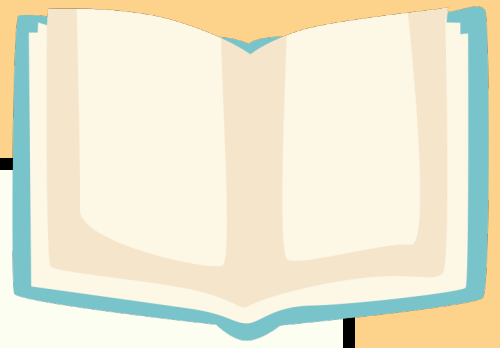
Q4 . Follow the ribbon.



What does the blue ribbon beneath the box in suggest in the lighthouse story?



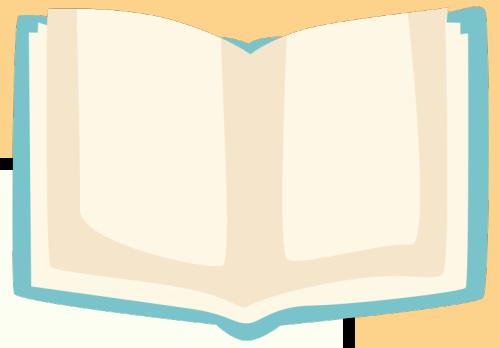
A4 · Follow the ribbon.



Leila tied blue ribbon to the model, so the ribbon suggested that the missing lighthouse may be in the box.



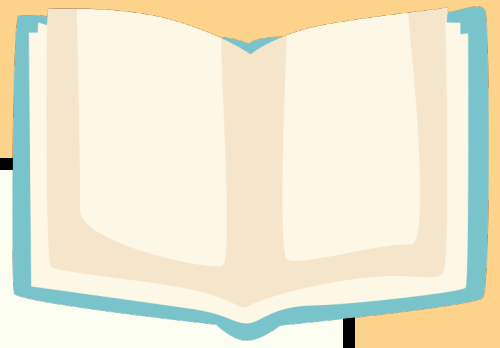
Q5 · Confirm the answer



Mr Chen opens the lid and lifts out the model. Which clue becomes a confirmed answer?



A5 · Confirm the answer



The ribbon and partial “LIGHT...” label may connect to the confirmed location of the lighthouse.



Q6 · Repair the explanation



Improve this answer: “The author uses suspense.” No detail and its effect on the reader.



A6 · Repair the explanation



The partly hidden label makes the reader wonder if the model is in the box;
opening the lid later answers that question.



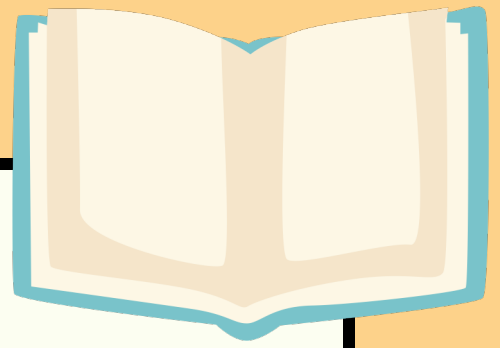
Q7 · Place the explanation



Should Mr Chen explain the safe move before or after he notices the leak if you want a short, fair delay? Why?



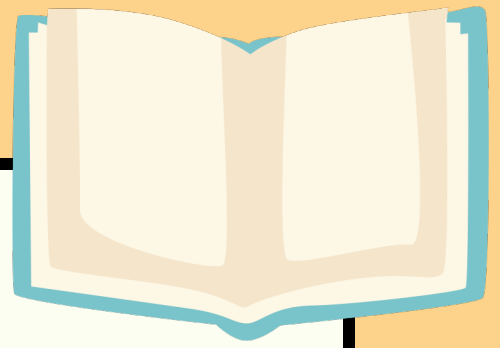
A7 · Place the explanation



After the leak is noticed: the wet cloth gives a clear red flag to suspect a safe move before Mr Chen confirms it.



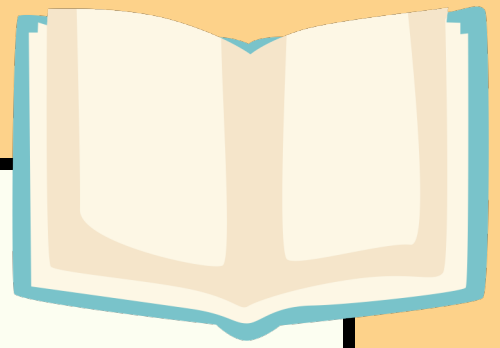
Q8 · Two kinds of clue



Name one clue given by the words and one clue that can be shown in a picture of the box.



A8 · Two kinds of clue



Words: the partly visible “LIGHT...” label, picture, blue lid beneath the lid.
Each can raise the same question.



Q9 . Missing poster



A missing exhibition poster is followed by a picture of a sheet beside the stage. What remains uncertain



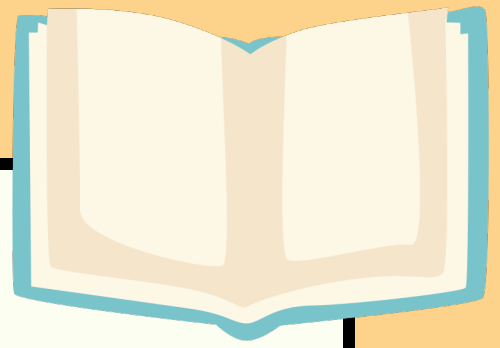
A9 . Missing poster



The reader can wonder whether the room the poster is in, when it opens, the picture is evidence for a guess, not proof.



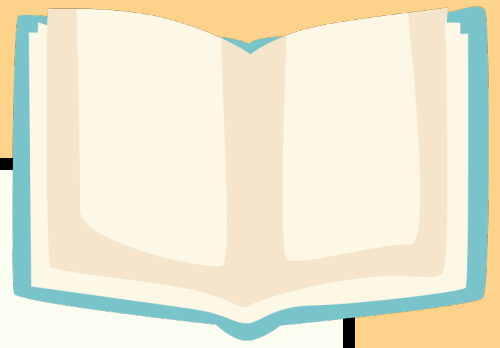
Q10 · Use evidence



Write an evidence-and-effect sentence for the collection in Q9.



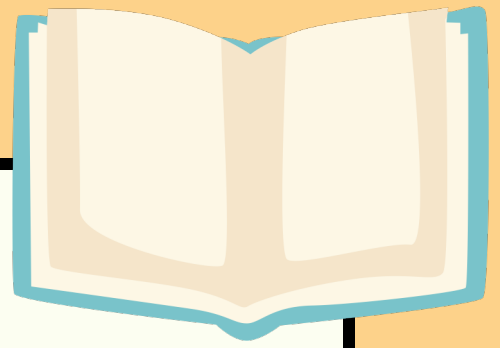
A10 · Use evidence



The rolled sheet near the stage makes the reader wonder if the poster was moved there; unrolling it could answer that question.

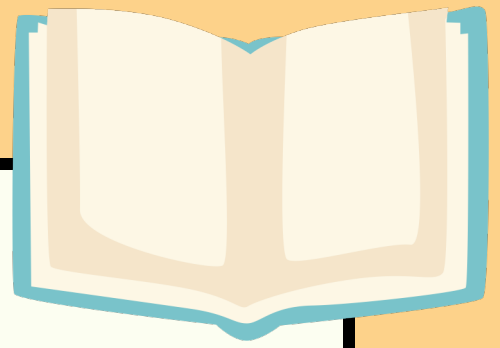


Q11 · Avoid a leap



Does a partly seen box prove that someone stole the diamond house? Why or why not?



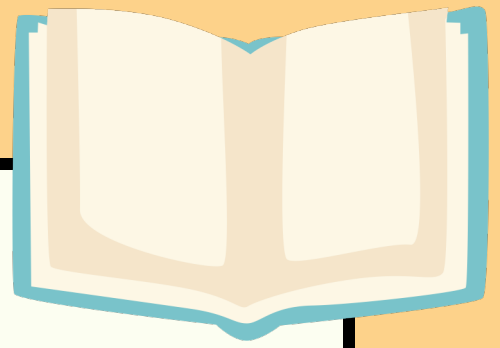


All · Avoid a leap

No. The box suggests a location, not that. The lack of a supported reason that someone may have moved the model safely.



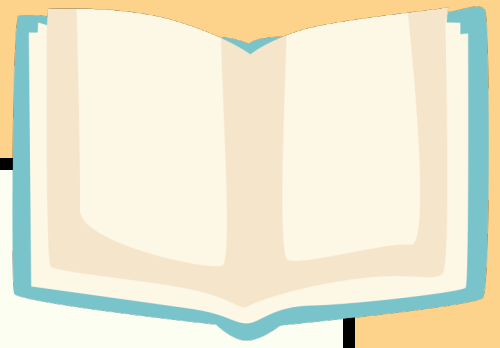
Q12 · Four moments



Fresh case: the class robot vanishes before a test. We find a wheel track ends at the storeroom and Ms Cole finds a tool. Pictures show a red bolt and a robot-shaped cloth. Later we reveal the repaired robot. Explain two word and two picture moments.



AI2 · Four moments



Words: track → where did it go? Tool → why? Ms → need it? Pictures: red bolt → is it damaged? Cloth shoe → is inside. The repair reveal pays off the linked questions. Each event detail is a clue, not proof.





Well done!
Use details to explain each
payoff.

