

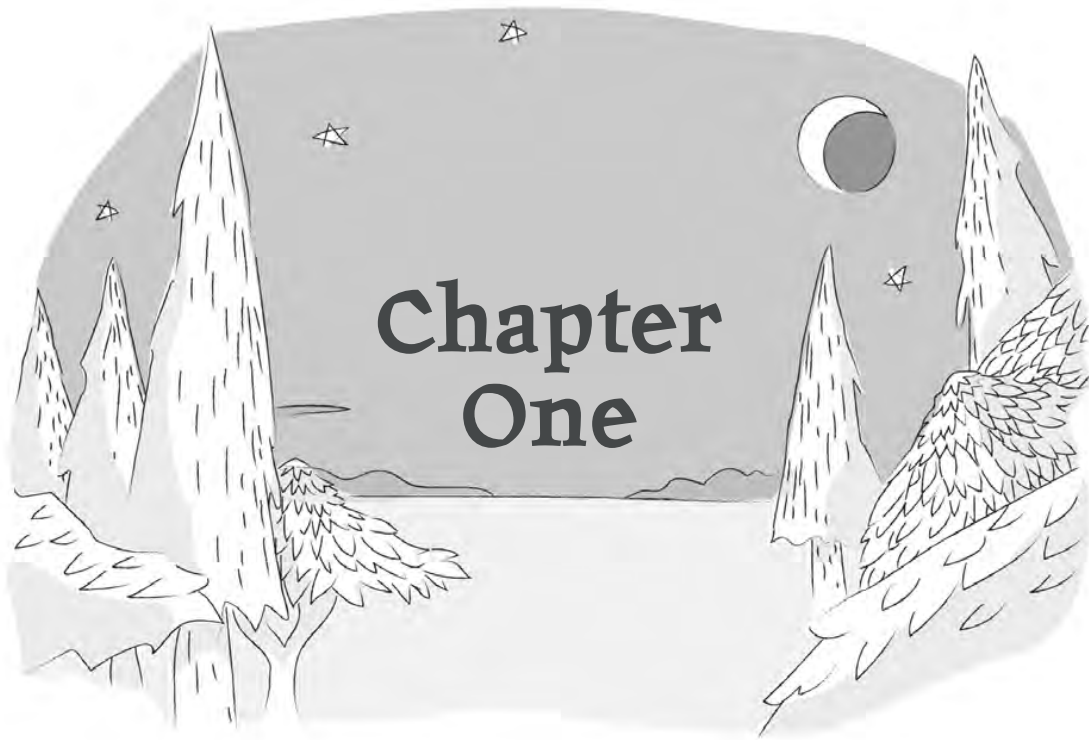
Activity Pack - Chapter One

# NIGHT ZOO KEEPER

The Giraffes of  
Whispering Wood



Joshua  
Davidson



**W**ill Rivers took a step back from the wall. He clamped the end of his paintbrush between his teeth and admired his work. Well, his painting was certainly big. And purple. Very purple. Will smiled with satisfaction. He had captured the shape and features really well. It looked great. Almost perfect in fact.

A voice next to him said, 'Oh mate, what have you done?'

Will hadn't noticed his friend Isaac come and stand next to him. Isaac was examining Will's painting with a sour look on his face.

'I mean, seriously. That's not how an elephant should look,' said Isaac.

'What d'you mean?' replied Will.

'Durr! The colour. What's that about?'

'What's wrong with it?' asked Will.

'What are you? Six?' said Isaac. 'Make-believe stuff is fine for sad little kids in the infants who



don't know anything. Now it's just tragic.'

Will felt his cheeks glowing warmly. Not for the first time, he wondered why he was friends with Isaac.

Isaac continued, 'The teacher is not going to be happy with you; everyone else is doing it right. Look.'

Isaac pointed to the line of children stretched out along the outer wall of the zoo. Will looked at his classmates, who were all busy painting different animals on the wall. His new teacher, Mrs Barnes, was inspecting a tiger painted by a group of girls. It was Mrs Barnes who had organised this whole special project to paint a giant mural on the walls of the local zoo. She had reminded the class several times what an honour it was. She had also reminded them not to mess it up. Many times. Will frowned.

'Seriously, mate. Why couldn't you just do a normal elephant?' asked Isaac with a sigh.

'I was being creative,' muttered Will.

'Well, you weren't told to do that. It's probably against the rules.' Will gulped. 'Rules? What rules?' He glanced over at Mrs Barnes nervously.

'Durr! The rules of life. You know? Elephants are grey, zebras are black and white, penguins are orange.'

'Orange?' repeated Will.

Isaac rolled his eyes. 'I was being sarcastic.'

Will looked at his giant picture of the purple elephant. He suddenly realized what was missing.

'Anyway, it isn't finished yet,' he told Isaac firmly. He picked up a clean paintbrush and grabbed a tube of bright yellow paint. He squeezed a blob onto his palette. Will stepped forward and painted a large yellow

symbol in the centre of the elephant's forehead.

'Oh, very realistic,' said Isaac with a slow shake of his head. 'What's that?'

'An eternity symbol,' replied Will. 'It's the same as the tattoo my grandma got in India.'

'Your grandma's got a tattoo?' said Isaac, wrinkling up his nose.

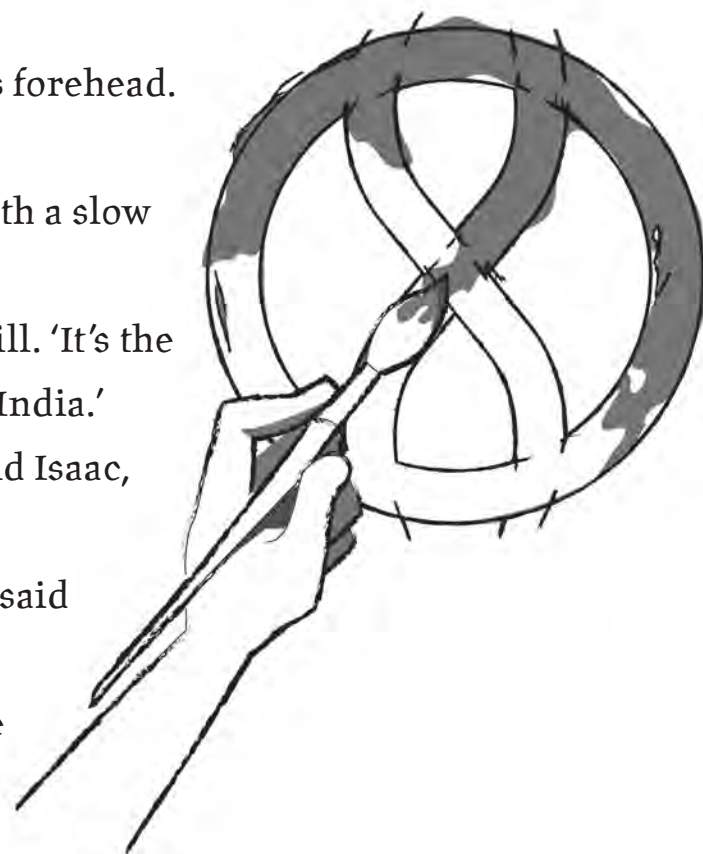
'Yeah! She's got loads. So what?' said Will.

'You're gonna be in such trouble for this,' Isaac muttered and sloped off back to his place in the line.

Will tried to pretend he didn't care. He spotted Mrs Barnes wandering in his direction and his heart suddenly raced in his chest. Will didn't want to get in trouble. He never set out to break the rules. He was the only person in his family who was normal like that.

'Pack up your things, Year Five,' called out Mrs Barnes. 'Time to walk back to school.'

Will sighed with relief. He quickly packed up his materials. As he headed off to join his class, he glanced back at his purple painting. Although he was still worried about being in trouble, he really liked it. There was something kind of magical about it and he was proud of himself.



Will flung open the back gate to his house. He stalked down the side of the strange shed that his grandma lived in at the bottom of the garden. Ahead of him, Will could hear his grandma's voice. She spoke with such a big, rich voice for such a tiny person. She was telling one of her stories. 'And just in time, the Ant General ordered the army of ants to help,' she was saying.

Will entered the garden and saw his Grandma sitting on the steps of her shed.



Across from her, Will's six-year-old brother Charlie was lying on the grass with his head on his scrunched-up school jumper. Their grandma, with her wild white hair and battered walking boots, peered over her glasses at him. 'Good afternoon, Will,' she said.

'Hi, Grandma,' Will replied quietly. He kept walking. He wasn't in the mood to chat. Will's pride in his painting had worn off. He had been fretting on his walk home. Isaac had been right. Why had he done it purple? Elephants were grey. That was how you were supposed to paint them. He was going to be in trouble for sure.

'Join us for the story?' asked his grandma.

Will pretended not to hear her and continued towards the house.

'Will, dear, is everything okay?' she asked.

'Sorry, Grandma,' he replied over his shoulder. 'I've got tons of homework to do. Mrs Barnes, our new teacher, gives us loads extra.'

'Hey, Will,' said Charlie. 'Wait a sec.'

Will turned towards him. His scruffy little brother was smiling at him. 'What?' Will said impatiently.

'I've got a new teacher too.'

'No you haven't.'

'I have! She's got wonky eyes,' insisted Charlie.

'No, Charlie. Not one of your jokes, please,' groaned Will.

'I'm not joking. She's a rubbish teacher though.'

'Why?'

'She can't control her pupils!' Charlie said and giggled. 'Geddit?'

'Oh, Charlie, I love it!' exclaimed Grandma Rivers. She threw her head back and honked with laughter. Will smiled weakly and turned towards the house. Grandma Rivers lifted her glasses and wiped away a tear.

'Right, where were we?' she said. 'Ahhh yes, and as everyone knows, an army of ants can be as strong as an ox.' And with that, she continued her story.

'Ants aren't like oxen and elephants aren't purple,' Will muttered to himself. 'Stupid make-believe, stupid jokes, stupid mural.'

'Hi, Will,' said a girl's voice. It was Riya, Will's next-door neighbour. He hadn't noticed her before as she was sitting on top of the wall between their houses. Will looked up at his friend. He wasn't sure he would be quite so confident up that high.

'Oh, hi,' he replied.

'Your hair. You've changed it again. It looks kind of purple. And silver.'

Riya smiled and nodded. 'I couldn't decide, so I just went for both,' she said with a shrug. 'Mum's cross about it. Says I never think things through.'

'Looks cool,' said Will.

'I've got some of the purple spray left. You want it?' she asked.

Will shook his head quickly. 'Come on, Will. Where's your sense of adventure?' Riya asked with a smirk. Will looked away. He wouldn't have dared to dye his hair, especially without permission. Riya changed the subject. 'Well, are you both excited?' she asked. 'You and Grandma



Rivers? It's both your birthdays tomorrow. You're going to catch up with me at last, right?'

Will felt his cheeks glow a little: Riya was nearly eleven. 'Sure, ten. Tomorrow,' he said.

A cross voice called out from next door's garden, 'Riya, I've told you before. Get down from there. It's dangerous!'

Riya twisted round. 'But I'm listening to Grandma Rivers' story,' she protested.

'Get down and come and tidy up this mess you've made please,' replied Riya's mum.

Riya turned back to Will. 'Well, happy birthday for tomorrow,' she said and swung her legs back over the wall. 'See ya.' She dropped out of sight, but seconds later, Will heard her talking to her mum.

'It's not a mess. It's a sculpture,' Riya said.

'Made from my onions and potatoes?' exclaimed her mum.

Will smiled. 'See ya,' he said and headed up the steps to the back door.



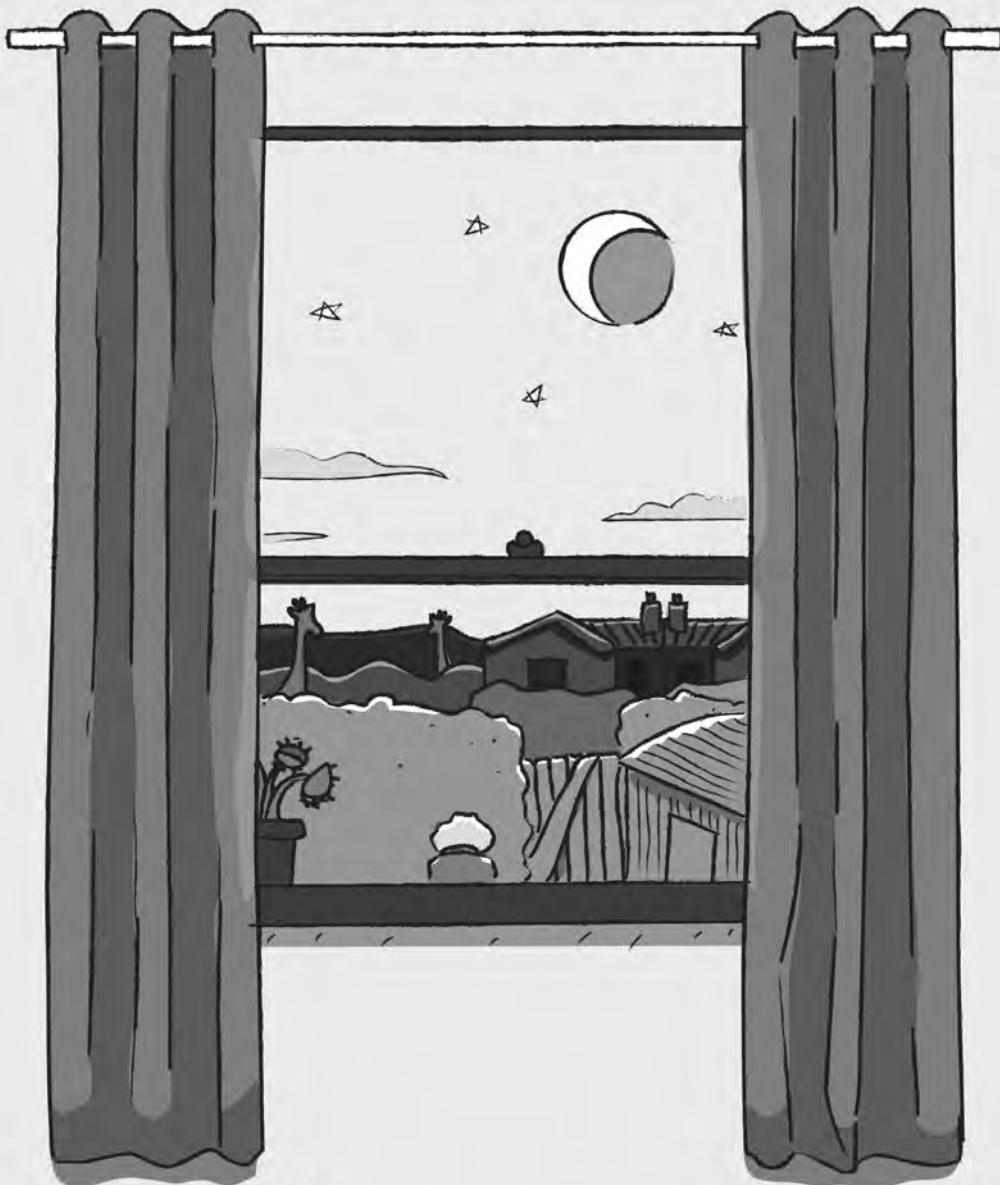
That night, Will couldn't get to sleep. On the bunk bed below, Charlie had gone out like a light and was snoring loudly. Will wondered what present his parents had bought him. Please let it be the phone, he thought. He was going to be ten after all. Ten! He wondered if he'd feel different in the morning. More grown-up and clever, like Riya. Charlie's snoring was getting even louder. Will huffed. A phone would be great, he thought, but so would having his own room.

There was another noise in the distance.



Will recognized it. The zoo was only a few streets away and Will could often hear the animals. He realized the window was open and the sound of squawking flamingos was drifting in on the night air.

Will climbed down the ladder and crossed over to the window. He opened a chink in the curtain and peered out over the rooftops in the direction of the zoo. The flamingos were still screeching and squawking. Will wondered why they were being so noisy. He yanked the window shut to muffle the noise. As he did so, he knocked into one of his many pot plants on the windowsill.



He caught it just as it tipped over the edge. He let out a low whistle of relief: it was his favourite Venus flytrap. Will examined its purple, clam-shaped leaves with their long green teeth for damage. He then replaced the pot carefully on the sill. Out of the corner of his eye, he caught sight of a figure in the garden below. It was his grandma. She was standing still in the middle of the lawn in her nightie. Her wild white hair was glowing in the moonlight. She had her back to him, her head tilted to one side. What was she doing? She's listening, thought Will. Listening to those flamingos. In her nightie.

'You're so weird, Grandma,' he said under his breath, and returned to bed.



# What do you remember from Chapter One?

Circle the correct answers to the questions below!

**1. What is Will's teacher's name?**

- A) Mrs Isaac      B) Mrs Barnes      C) Mrs Books

**2. What does Will paint on the elephant's forehead?**

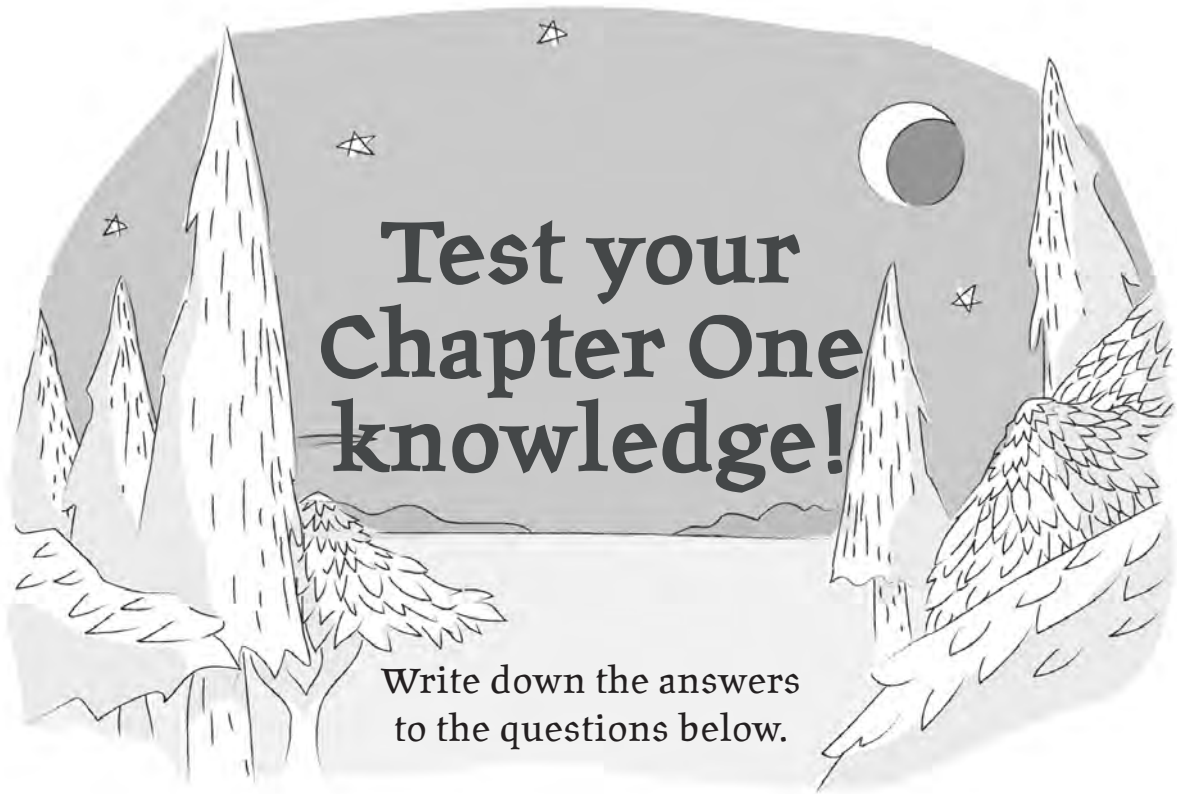
- A) a yellow symbol      B) a purple symbol      C) a small symbol

**3. What does the symbol on the elephant's forehead mean?**

- A) eternity      B) peace      C) fun

**4. Who is Grandma Rivers telling a story about when Will arrives home?**

- A) the Dolphin Leader      B) the Ant General      C) the Elephant Elder



1. Which kind of plant does Will have?

---

2. What animals were making noise late at night in the zoo?

---

3. What is Riya's sculpture made out of?

---

4. Which holiday is Will about to celebrate?

---

Tick one box in each row to show whether the statement is true or false.

	True	False
Isaac really likes Will's elephant painting.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will loves his brother's jokes.		
Riya has purple and silver hair.		
At the end of the chapter, Will's Venus flytrap falls over and smashes.		
Grandma Rivers and Will share a birthday.		

Just like Will, draw your own magical animal on the wall of the Night Zoo!





## NOTES AND ANSWERS

This pack has been created to help children build upon the work they are doing on [nightzookeeper.com](http://nightzookeeper.com). The activities are all based on the skill of reading comprehension.

### HOW TO USE THIS PACK

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### ACTIVITIES INCLUDED

1. Read along with NZK Josh as he reads Chapter One of The Giraffes of Whispering Wood.
2. Test your memory with reading comprehension questions.
3. Continue your memory challenge by answering reading comprehension questions.
4. Review facts and events from the chapter.
5. Draw your own magical animal on the wall of the Night Zoo.
6. The flamingos of the Night Zoo are all a flutter over the drawing you created! Write a story about why your painting changed their lives.



# READING COMPREHENSION ANSWER SHEET

## Multiple Choice Questions

1. What is Will's teacher's name?

Answer: B) Mrs Barnes

2. What does Will paint on the elephant's forehead?

Answer: A) A yellow symbol

3. What does the symbol on the elephant's forehead mean?

Answer: A) Eternity

4. Who is Grandma Rivers telling a story about when Will arrives home?

Answer: B) An Ant General

## Short Answer Questions

1. Which kind of plant does Will have?

Answer: Will has a Venus flytrap.

2. What animals were making noise late at night in the zoo?

Answer: The flamingos were making noise.

3. What is Riya's sculpture made out of?

Answer: It is made of onions and potatoes.

4. Which holiday is Will about to celebrate?

Answer: He is about to celebrate his birthday.

## CHAPTER ONE ACTIVITIES ANSWER SHEET

Tick one box in each row to show whether the statement is true or false.

	True	False
Isaac really likes Will's elephant painting.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will loves his brother's jokes.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Riya has purple and silver hair.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
At the end of the chapter, Will's Venus flytrap falls over and smashes.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Grandma Rivers and Will share a birthday.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

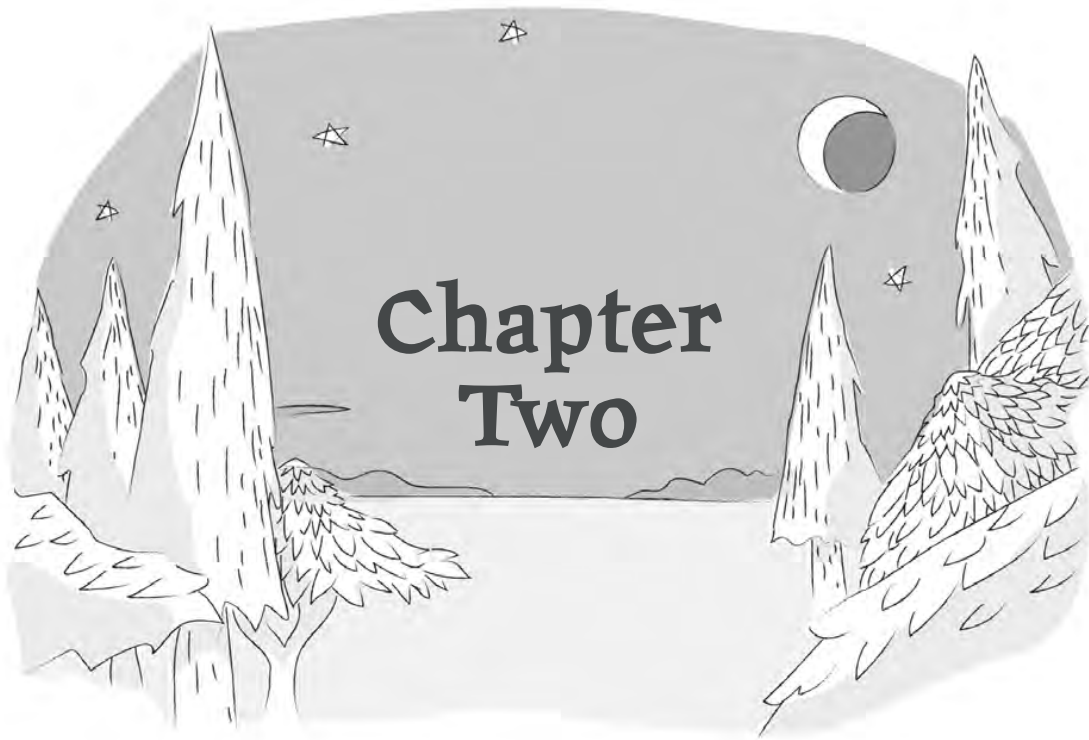
Activity Pack - Chapter Two

# NIGHT ZOO KEEPER

The Giraffes of  
Whispering Wood



Joshua  
Davidson



**H**ello Will, my dear. Have you finished?' Will turned to see Grandma Rivers peering over his shoulder at his painting.

'Grandma, what are you doing here?' he asked in surprise.

'Oh, I was just passing and spotted you.' She was examining the purple elephant carefully. 'It's wonderful,' she said. 'The eternity symbol is perfect.'

'Thanks,' said Will.

'And these magnificent gates? Did you do those too?

'No,' replied Will looking at the painting of some tall gates next to his elephant. 'That was someone else.'

'Well, anyway, your painting is perfect. You couldn't have given me a better present,' said Grandma Rivers, beaming.



Will wasn't sure what she meant. His painting was part of his class project, not a present for Grandma Rivers. He was about to correct her when he remembered what her actual present was. He had wrapped it in a rush before school: a pair of woolly bedsocks. He felt a twinge of guilt as he remembered he hadn't even bought the socks himself: his mum had picked them up for him.

'I'm glad you like it, Grandma,' he said.

'I'm not sure I do,' said a voice.

Will turned to see his teacher Mrs Barnes examining his painting. She wrinkled her nose and tutted three times in quick succession. Isaac was lurking next to her, his hands behind his back. He smiled smugly at Will. Will clenched his jaw. It was obvious that Isaac had told their teacher about his purple picture. Now Isaac was hanging about desperately hoping to see Will get into trouble.

'Oh dear,' said Mrs Barnes. 'What a pity. Not exactly what I was looking for, zoologically-speaking.'

Isaac sniggered. Will flushed with a mix of embarrassment and irritation.

'Does it matter?' asked Grandma Rivers.

Mrs Barnes gave Grandma Rivers a questioning look. 'Well, I've never seen a purple elephant, have you?'

'You'd be surprised,' replied Will's grandma.

'And what's that thing on its forehead?' Mrs Barnes asked.

'An eternity sign,' replied Will, shifting uncomfortably from foot to foot.

'Where did you get that silly idea from?' she exclaimed.

'Right here,' said Grandma Rivers firmly. She rolled up the sleeve of her cardigan. Mrs Barnes almost gasped in surprise as she caught sight of the eternity tattoo on Grandma Rivers' forearm.

'Oh, how unusual,' said Mrs Barnes.

Will's chest suddenly throbbed with pride for his grandma.

'Would you like to see some of my other ones?' asked Grandma Rivers. She glanced at Will. Her eyes were twinkling behind her round spectacles. Will's mouth dropped open in horror as he realized what she was about to do.

'Grandma, not those tattoos,' he pleaded quietly.

She winked at him and turned back to Mrs Barnes. 'I've got a big tattoo right here.' She lifted up the bottom of her cardigan and hooked a thumb into the elastic waistband of her long skirt. She began to pull the top of her skirt down towards her bottom. Mrs Barnes looked alarmed and Isaac put his hands over his eyes.

'Please stop right there,' Mrs Barnes interrupted quickly. 'Think of the children!'

Grandma Rivers removed her thumb and smiled sweetly at the teacher. Will, who had been holding his breath, sighed with relief.

Mrs Barnes recovered herself. 'I'm sorry, Will, I must insist,' she said. 'You need to change your picture.'

'What?' said Will. 'No, please.'

Mrs Barnes ignored him. 'Isaac,' she said. 'The paint please.' Isaac stepped forward with a grin, revealing what he had been hiding behind his back: a large pot of thick, grey paint and a gunky paintbrush.

Will's heart sank. Mrs Barnes held out the brush towards him. Will turned to Grandma Rivers for help. To his surprise, Grandma Rivers pulled him into a powerful hug and whispered in his ear.

'Remember, that elephant can be anything you want it to be. All you need to do is believe. You're ready. You're finally ready!' She released him and smiled brightly.

'Anyway, I'm off! Gotta see a man about a crocodile,' she announced. 'Goodbye, Mrs Boring! Whoops, I mean Barnes.

Boring Barnes! Silly me!' Mrs Barnes scowled. Will covered his mouth to hide his smile. And without another word, Grandma Rivers strode away on her short, sturdy legs.

Mrs Barnes fixed Will with a stern look. 'You know what to do, young man,' she said. Reluctantly, Will took the brush and pot of paint. Mrs Barnes turned on her heel and stalked away. Isaac scurried after her. Will turned to see Grandma Rivers disappearing around the corner of the street. He laughed. She had been so rude, threatening to show her tattooed bottom and calling his teacher Mrs Boring! Will stared at the brush in his hand and then at his picture. He shook his head and then started work. As he covered over the purple paint with the grey, his grandma's words echoed in his mind: 'You're ready. You're finally ready!' Will shook his head. Ready for what, he wondered. His grandma really was strange.



After school, Will was sitting at the kitchen table. His mum had made a huge, wonky cake. Each layer was a different, bright colour and it was decorated with sprinkles, bonbons, and candied fruit.

'I helped,' said his brother proudly.

'No kidding,' replied Will.

He thought that next year he might ask for a plain cake from the supermarket. 'Where's Grandma?' he asked. 'And where's her cake?'

'I'll get her,' announced Charlie.

'Hang on, Charlie,' said Will's mum quickly. Will saw her swap a look with his dad.

'The thing is . . . well, she's gone away.'

'You mean, she's not here?' asked Will.

'Sorry, Will, I just went to check. Her shed's all locked up,' said his dad. 'She only told us she was going away this morning. She's off on one of her adventures. You know what she's like.'

Will felt a bit hollow inside. It was the first time he could remember his grandma not being there. They had always celebrated their birthdays together. Couldn't she have waited one day? It didn't feel the same. There would be no amazing story this year. There would be fewer candles and fewer laughs.

'But I haven't given her my present,' he said.

'It's okay,' said his mum. 'I gave it to her before she left. And she left you this.'

Will's mum handed him a round package. It felt heavy for its size. Will removed and read the gift tag:

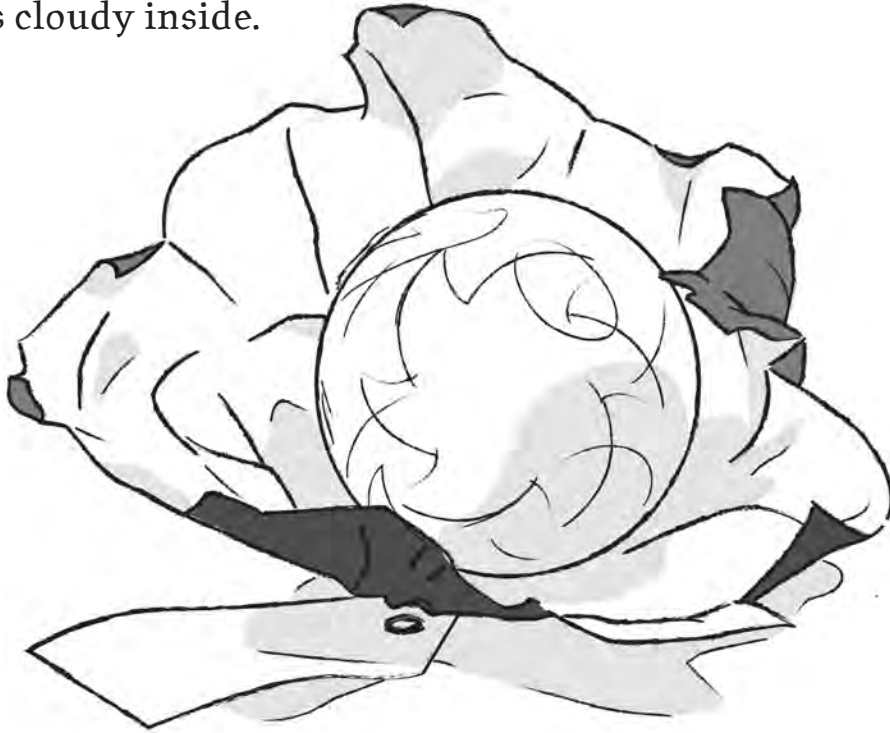


Will peeled the wrapping paper apart and looked at the object inside: it was a large glass sphere, like an oversized paperweight. The glass was cloudy.



'What's she given you this time?' his dad asked.

'No idea,' Will replied. He examined the sphere more closely. He had been wrong. It wasn't the glass that was cloudy: it was more that the sphere was cloudy inside.

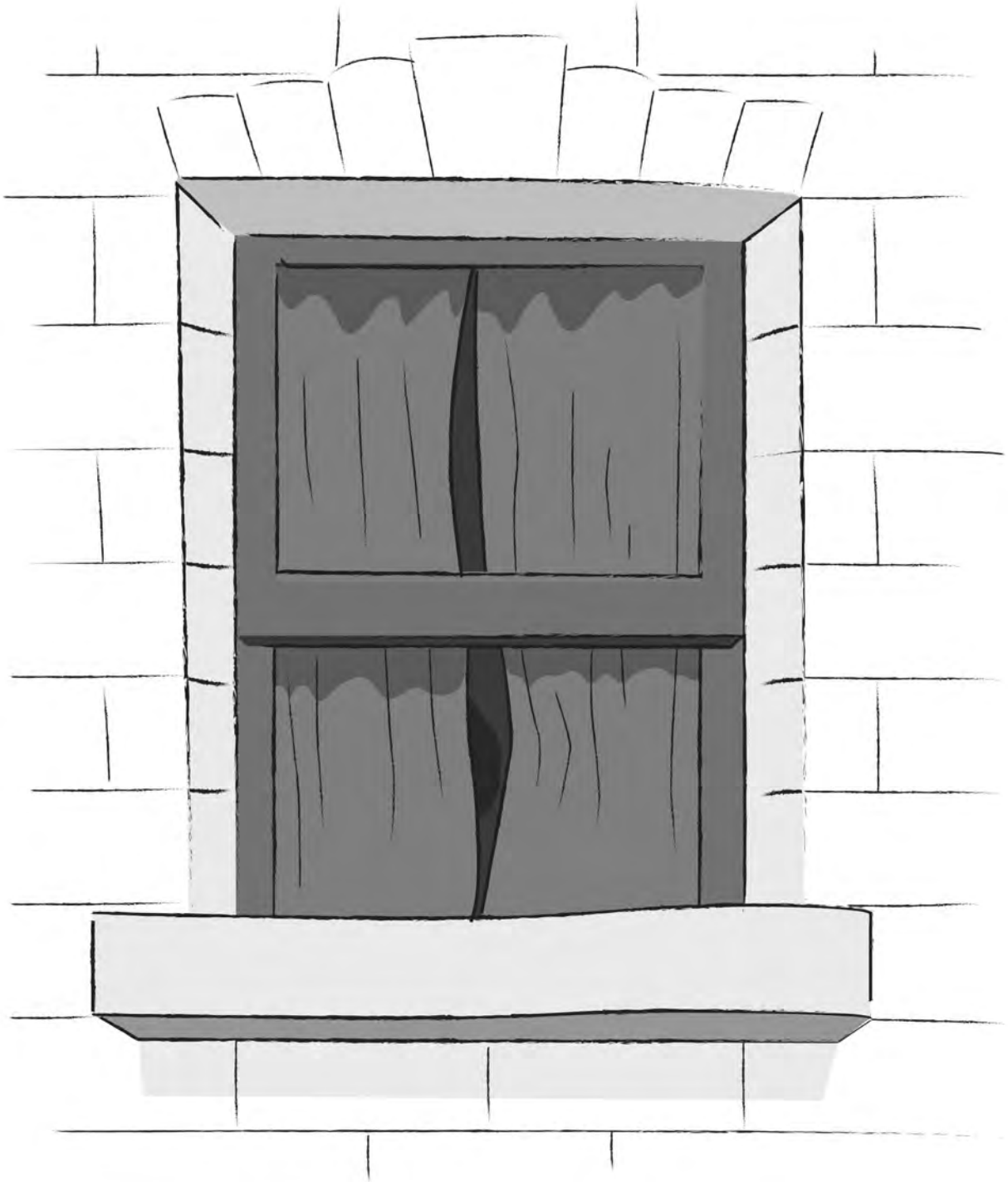


He shook it gently. The cloudy contents swirled slowly like grey syrup. Will was baffled. The glass felt warm in his hand, comforting even. Despite its weird appearance, he instantly liked it. He slipped the sphere into his pocket and munched thoughtfully on a slice of green birthday cake.

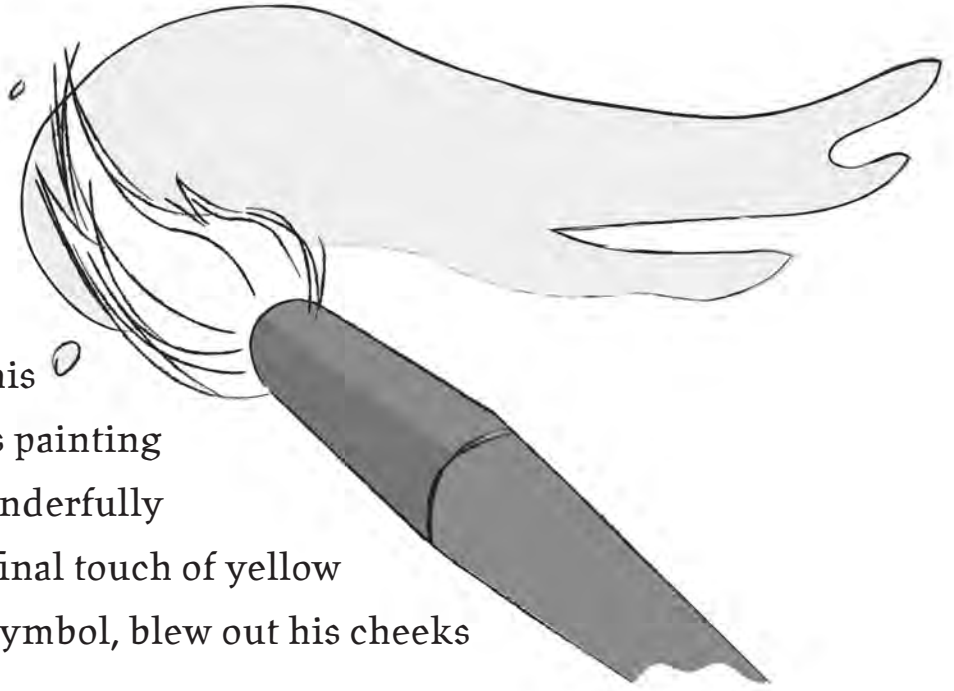
As the others tidied up after tea, Will left the house quietly by the back door.

It was almost dark. He had made a decision. If Grandma could do what she liked on her birthday, so could he! Her words had come back to him: that elephant can be anything you want it to be. She didn't worry about rules and being zoological or anything else, so why should he? Will didn't care what Mrs Barnes or Isaac thought. He wanted his painting to be purple, just the way his grandma had liked it. He was going to put things right.

He turned out of the back gate down the alley. His heart was racing with excitement. He glanced up at Riya's house. He wondered about calling out to see if she'd keep him company, but the light in her bedroom window was off. For a second, he thought he saw the curtains twitch, but it was probably just a trick of the fading light.



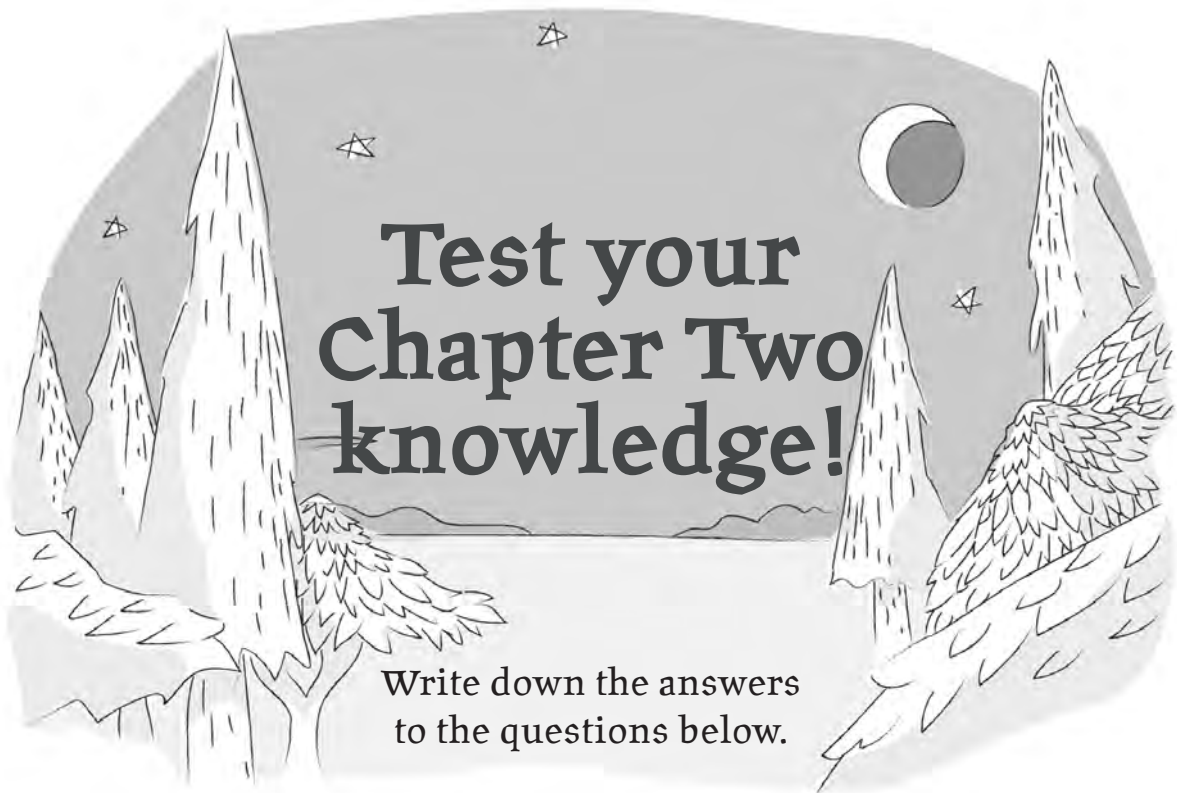
Half an hour later, Will took a step back from the mural. He clamped the end of his paintbrush between his teeth and nodded. His painting was purple again. Wonderfully purple. Will added a final touch of yellow paint to the eternity symbol, blew out his cheeks and smiled.



‘Well, Grandma, wherever you’ve gone, I hope you’re proud of me,’ he said to himself quietly.

All of a sudden, the outer edges of his painting began to glow. Will stumbled backwards in surprise. The eternity sign on the elephant’s forehead burst into golden light. Will stared in fascination: all up and down the wall, the painted animals on the mural lit up and shone brightly. And then, to Will’s astonishment, the elephant in front of him winked! Will shook his head in disbelief. Will shaded his eyes and squinted as he watched the glowing gates next to his elephant swing open slowly and gracefully.





1. What message does Grandma Rivers leave Will on his birthday gift?

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2. Why doesn't Mrs. Barnes like the elephant Will has painted?

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3. What happens when Will re-paints his elephant purple?

---

4. What does the present Grandma Rivers gives to Will look like?

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# What do you remember from Chapter Two?

Circle the correct answers to the questions below!

**1. What does Grandma Rivers call Mrs. Barnes?**

- A) Mrs. Broccoli    B) Mrs. Boring    C) Mrs. Brave

**2. Who helped decorate Will's birthday cake?**

- A) Charlie    B) Mrs. Barnes    C) Riya

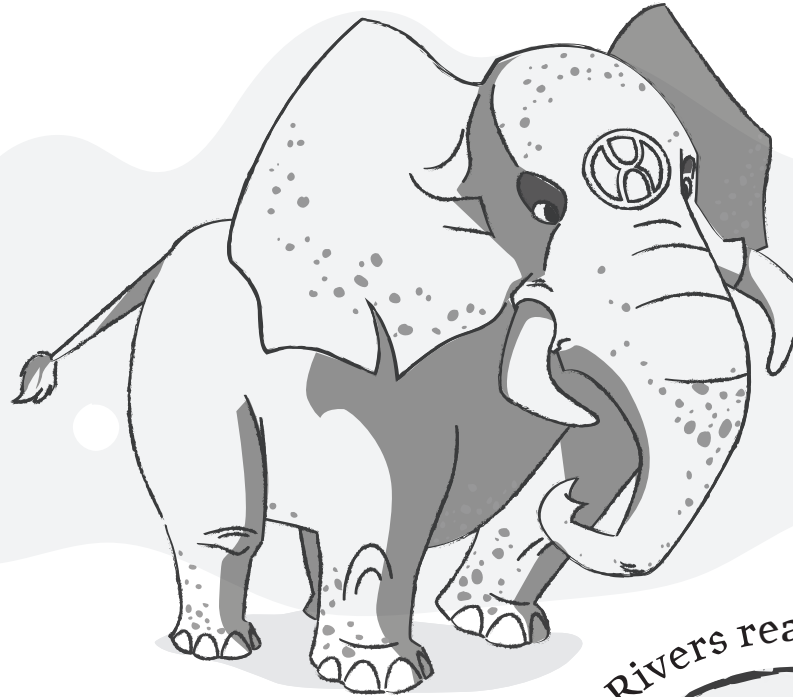
**3. Where does Grandma Rivers have an eternity symbol tattoo?**

- A) On her back    B) On her leg    C) On her forearm

**4. Where has Grandma Rivers gone at the end of the chapter?**

- A) On an adventure    B) To the store    C) To bed

Grandma Rivers and Mrs. Barnes react differently to seeing Will's painting. Tick the boxes below to show their reactions!



How does Mrs. Barnes react? Tick one.



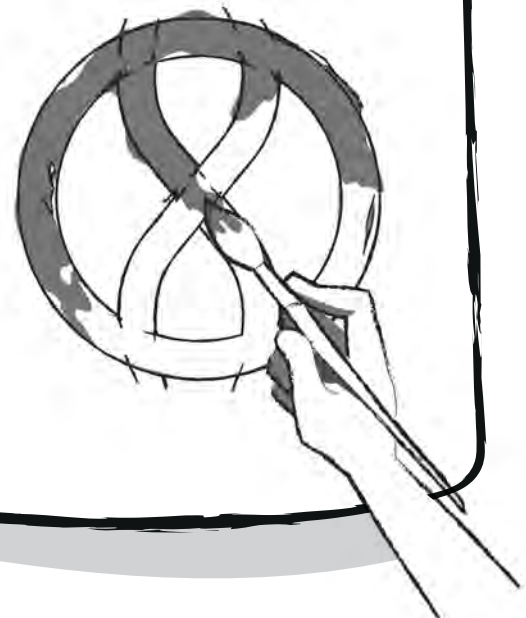
- She dislikes it.
- She likes it.
- She is proud.
- She is happy.

How does Grandma Rivers react? Tick one.



- She is sad.
- She is angry.
- She loves it.
- She dislikes it.

Grandma Rivers seems to  
appreciate unique art.  
Can you design a magical  
symbol that she would also like?



# Grandma Rivers has some more questions for you.

1. What does the symbol mean or represent?

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2. Why will Grandma Rivers like your new creation?

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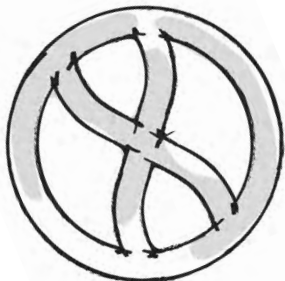
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3. What special power do you think it could have in the Night Zoo?

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## NOTES AND ANSWERS

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### ACTIVITIES INCLUDED

1. Read along with NZK Josh as he reads Chapter Two of The Giraffes of Whispering Wood.
2. Test your memory with reading comprehension questions.
3. Continue your memory challenge by answering reading comprehension questions.
4. Tick the boxes to show how Grandma Rivers and Mrs. Barnes reacted to Will's painting.
5. Design your own magical symbol like Will!
6. Answer questions about your magical design.
7. Grandma Rivers loves your design! Write a story about what it represents and why it's important to the Night Zoo.

# READING COMPREHENSION ANSWER SHEET

## Multiple Choice Questions

1. What does Grandma Rivers call Mrs Barnes?

Answer: B) Mrs Boring

2. Who helped decorate Will's birthday cake?

Answer: A) Charlie

3. Where does Grandma Rivers have an eternity symbol tattoo?

Answer: C) On her forearm.

4. Where has Grandma Rivers gone at the end of the chapter?

Answer: A) On an adventure.

## Short Answer Questions

1. What message does Grandma Rivers leave Will on his birthday gift?

Answer: "From here begins the battle."

2. Why doesn't Mrs. Barnes like the elephant Will has painted?

Answer: It isn't zoologically accurate.

3. What happens when Will re-paints his elephant purple?

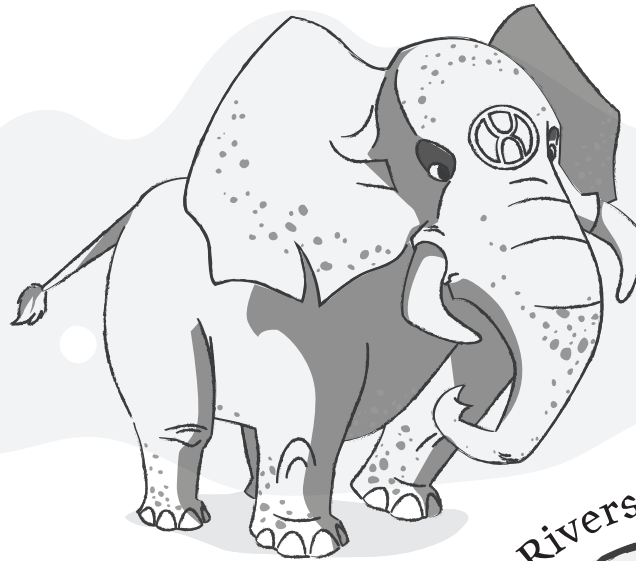
Answer: The painting begins to glow and come to life.

4. What does the present Grandma Rivers gives to Will look like?

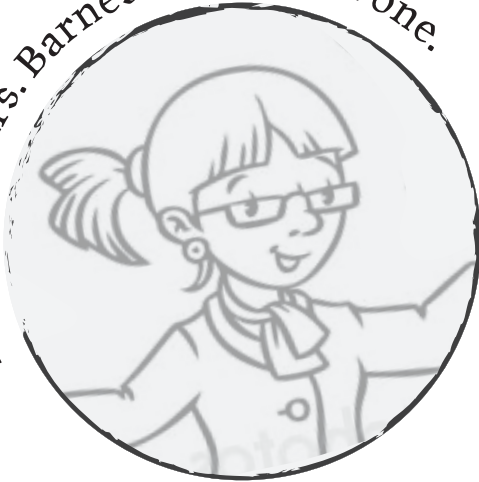
Answer: It is a large glass sphere.

## CHAPTER TWO ACTIVITIES ANSWER SHEET

Grandma Rivers and Mrs. Barnes react differently to seeing Will's painting. Tick the boxes below to show their reactions!



How does Mrs. Barnes react? Tick one.



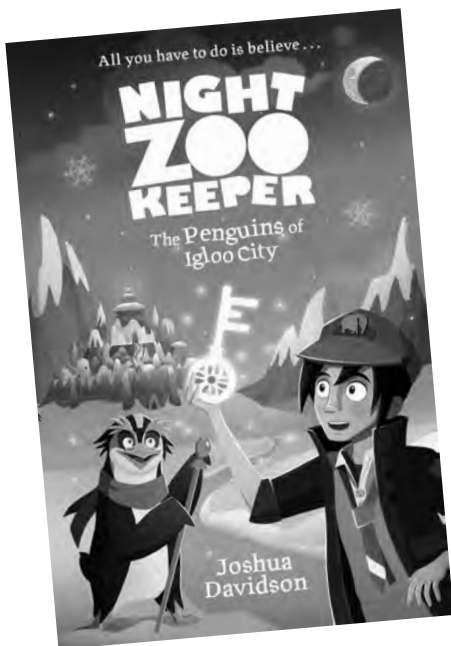
- She dislikes it.
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- She is proud.
- She is happy.

How does Grandma Rivers react? Tick one.



- She is sad.
- She is angry.
- She loves it.
- She dislikes it.

# Read the full series!



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