

The Map Inside the Walls

A Fleydo English School Story

A2 Level | Teens (11–16) | Reading | Story | 14 Pages

Fourteen-year-old Zara discovers a hand-drawn map hidden inside a wall in her school basement. With her friend Marcus, she follows the map through underground tunnels and discovers an enormous library that has been sealed for over a hundred years. An elderly guardian, Dr Helen Price, has been protecting the library for fifty years. Together, they must decide: should the library stay secret, or should it belong to everyone?

Learning Objectives

- Read and understand an A2-level adventure story (14 pages)
- Learn 15 new vocabulary words in context
- Practise vocabulary with matching and fill-in-the-blank exercises
- Test reading comprehension with 10 multiple-choice questions
- Discuss themes: curiosity, courage, friendship, and the value of books

1 Read the Story

Chapter 1: The Boring Basement

Zara finds something strange behind an old wall

Zara hated Thursdays. Every Thursday after school, she had to help Mr Collins, the caretaker, carry old boxes to the **basement** of Westfield Secondary School. The basement was cold, dusty, and boring. There were broken chairs, old textbooks from the 1990s, and boxes that nobody had opened for years.

"Be careful with those, please," Mr Collins said, as Zara dropped a heavy box on the floor. Something cracked inside. "Zara! I said careful!"

"Sorry," Zara muttered. She was fourteen and had better things to do — like finishing her science project or texting her friend Marcus about the weekend.

She pushed the box against the back wall. But as she pushed, she felt something move. A brick in the wall shifted. Zara froze. She pressed the brick again, harder this time. It slid backwards and fell out on the other side.

Behind the brick, in the dark space inside the wall, Zara saw something. It was yellow and old, folded many times. She reached in carefully and pulled it out.

It was a piece of paper — no, it was a map. A hand-drawn map, old and fragile, with strange symbols and lines that looked like streets and tunnels. At the bottom, someone had written in tiny letters: "*For those **curious** enough to look.*"

Chapter 2: The Map

A hand-drawn map reveals hidden tunnels under the city

That evening, Zara sat on her bed and studied the map under her desk lamp. It was drawn in dark brown ink on thick, yellowed paper. The edges were torn and soft, like fabric. At the top, someone had written: "*Westfield Tunnels — 1923.*"

The map showed the school building, and beneath it, a network of **tunnels** — thin lines going in different directions under the city streets. One tunnel led from the school basement to a large rectangular space under the city centre. Next to it, the same tiny handwriting said: "*The Library Below.*"

Zara's heart beat faster. A library? Underground? She had to tell Marcus.

She sent him a photo of the map. Three seconds later, her phone rang.

"Is this real?" Marcus asked. His voice was excited. Marcus loved history. He read books about **ancient** civilisations for fun.

"I found it inside a wall in the school basement," Zara said.

"We have to follow it. Tomorrow. After school."

"That's crazy, Marcus."

"That's the point."

The next day, Zara and Marcus met in the school basement at 4 p.m. Zara had a backpack with two torches, water, and her phone. Marcus brought a notebook and a ball of string.

"String?" Zara asked.

"So we can find our way back. I read about it in a Greek myth — Theseus in the labyrinth."

Zara rolled her eyes, but she had to admit it was a good idea.

They found the loose brick easily. Behind it, the space was bigger than Zara had thought. When they removed three more bricks, there was a gap large enough to crawl through. Cool air came from inside, smelling of earth and stone.

Marcus shone his torch into the darkness. The beam of light showed a narrow stone **passage** going down at a gentle slope.

"Ready?" Marcus **whispered**.

Zara took a deep breath. "Ready."

They crawled through the gap and stood up on the other side. The ceiling was low but just high enough to walk. Marcus tied the string to a pipe near the entrance, and they started walking into the dark.

Chapter 3: Into the Dark

Zara and Marcus enter the tunnels for the first time

The tunnel was narrow and quiet. Their footsteps echoed off the stone walls. Water dripped somewhere in the distance. The only light came from their torches, which made long, dancing shadows.

"According to the map, we need to go straight for about two hundred metres, then turn left," Marcus said, holding the map in one hand and his torch in the other.

"This is so cool," Zara said. Then she stepped in a puddle. "Okay, this part is not cool."

They walked in silence for a few minutes. The walls changed from rough brick to smooth stone. There were marks carved into the stone — arrows, numbers, and symbols that Zara didn't recognise.

"Someone built these tunnels a long time ago," Marcus said. "Look at the walls. This stone is at least a hundred years old."

"Why would someone build tunnels under a school?" Zara asked.

"The school was built in 1920. Maybe the tunnels were here first."

They reached a junction where the tunnel split into three. Marcus checked the map. "Left," he said. They turned left and the tunnel became wider. The ceiling was higher too. After another fifty metres, they reached a set of stone steps going down.

At the bottom of the steps, there was a door. Not a modern door — an old wooden door with iron handles and a heavy lock. But the lock was open.

"Someone has been here before us," Zara whispered. She felt a mix of excitement and fear. Who else knew about this place?

Marcus pushed the door. It was heavy, but it moved. It opened slowly with a deep, groaning sound, and a wave of cool, dry air came out.

They stepped through the door and pointed their torches ahead. For a moment, neither of them could speak.

They were standing at the top of a stone staircase that led down into an **enormous** underground hall. And the hall was full of books. Thousands and thousands of books, on shelves that reached from the floor to the ceiling, stretching away into the darkness in every direction.

"Oh my God," Zara breathed.

"It's real," Marcus said. "The Library Below. It's actually real."

Chapter 4: The Underground Library

They discover a vast library sealed for a century

They walked down the stone staircase into the library. It was the most amazing thing Zara had ever seen. The ceiling was painted with stars and maps of the night sky. Tall stone columns held up the roof, carved with patterns of leaves and vines. Between the columns, wooden bookshelves stood in long rows, filled with books of every size and colour.

There were old leather books with gold writing on the spines. There were thin books with colourful covers. There were maps rolled up in wooden tubes, and glass cases with **ancient** documents inside.

"This is incredible," Marcus said, running his fingers along the spines of the books. "Some of these are over two hundred years old. Look — this one is from 1798!"

Zara picked up a book from a nearby table. It was a science book about the stars, written in 1905. The pages were yellow but perfectly clean. The air down here was cool and dry — perfect for keeping books safe.

"But how?" Zara asked. "How can a whole library exist underground and nobody knows about it?"

"Somebody knew," Marcus said, pointing at the floor. There were footprints in the dust — recent footprints. Someone had been walking between the shelves, and recently.

They explored further. The library had several rooms connected by arched doorways. There was a reading room with old wooden desks and green glass lamps. There was a map room with enormous maps of the world pinned to the walls. There was even a small kitchen area with a kettle and some cups.

"Somebody definitely uses this place," Zara said, touching the kettle. It was warm.

Then they heard something. A soft sound, like pages turning. It came from the far end of the reading room.

"Did you hear that?" Zara grabbed Marcus's arm.

Marcus nodded. They moved slowly towards the sound. Behind the last bookshelf, in a corner lit by a small electric lamp, sat an old woman. She had white hair pulled back in a bun, round glasses, and she was reading a thick book. She looked up when she heard them and didn't look surprised at all.

"Ah," she said calmly. "I was wondering when someone would find the map. I left it in that wall thirty years ago." She closed her book and smiled. "My name is Dr Helen Price. Welcome to my library."

Zara's mouth fell open. Marcus dropped his notebook.

Chapter 5: The Guardian

Someone has been protecting the library all along

Dr Price made them tea in the small kitchen. She moved slowly but her eyes were bright and sharp. She told them she was eighty-two years old. She had been the **guardian** of this library for over fifty years.

"My father showed me this place when I was twelve," she said. "His father showed him. The library was built in the 1860s by a group of teachers and scientists who wanted to protect important books and knowledge. They were afraid that wars and fires would destroy the books above ground, so they created this **sealed** library underground."

"But why keep it secret?" Zara asked.

"Because **treasures** are safest when they are hidden," Dr Price said. "Every generation, one person becomes the guardian. I was that person. I've spent my life looking after these books — cleaning them, repairing them, keeping the air dry."

Marcus was amazed. "You've been coming down here for fifty years? By yourself?"

"Every week," Dr Price said. "But I am getting old. My legs are not strong. The stairs are difficult. I left the map in the wall because I knew that one day, someone **curious** would find it." She looked at Zara. "And you did."

"What happens now?" Zara asked. "We can't just leave all these books down here forever. People should know about this place."

Dr Price was quiet for a moment. She sipped her tea. "That is the question I have been asking myself for thirty years. Part of me wants the world to see this library. But part of me is afraid. What if people take the books? What if they sell them? What if they turn this beautiful place into a car park?"

She looked at the shelves around her with love in her eyes. "These books are a **discovery** that belongs to everyone — to the whole city. But they need protection."

Marcus leaned forward. "What if we could do both? Protect the library AND let people use it?"

"How?" Dr Price asked.

Zara thought hard. An idea was forming in her mind. "What if we talked to the school? And the city council? We could make it an official library. With proper access, and rules, and security. People could visit, read the books, learn from them — but nobody could take them or damage them."

Dr Price looked at her for a long time. Then she smiled. "You remind me of myself at your age. Full of **courage** and ideas."

Chapter 6: The Secret Comes Out

Zara must decide whether to tell the world

The next week was the hardest of Zara's life. She and Marcus talked to Dr Price three more times. They took photos of the library — carefully, with Dr Price's permission. They made a list of the most important books and documents.

Then came the scary part. Zara wrote a letter to the school headteacher, Mrs Walker, and asked for a meeting. Mrs Walker was **mysteriously** busy all week, but on Friday, she agreed to meet them.

Zara showed her the photos. Mrs Walker's eyes went wide. "This is under our school?"

"Yes. There are tunnels that connect the basement to an underground library. It's been there since the 1860s."

Mrs Walker was quiet for a long time. Then she picked up the phone and called the city council. By Monday, a team of historians, engineers, and librarians came to the school. They went down into the

tunnels with Zara, Marcus, and Dr Price.

When they saw the library, several of them cried. "This is one of the most important **discoveries** in the city's history," the chief historian said. "These books are priceless."

Chapter 7: A Library for Everyone

The underground library gets a second life

Three months later, on a warm Saturday in September, the Underground Library of Westfield officially opened to the public. The city council built a proper entrance with stairs and a lift. They installed lights, heating, and security cameras. They hired librarians to look after the books. But they kept the stone columns, the painted ceiling, and the old wooden shelves. The library looked almost exactly as it had for over a hundred and fifty years.

Dr Price cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony. She was wearing a purple dress and she was smiling wider than Zara had ever seen anyone smile.

"This library was built to protect knowledge," Dr Price said to the crowd. "It was hidden because the people who built it were afraid. But today, we are not afraid. Today, we share these **treasures** with the world."

Zara and Marcus stood in the front row. Marcus was taking notes. Zara was just looking around at the hundreds of people streaming into the library, their faces full of wonder.

"Not bad for a boring Thursday in the basement," Marcus said.

Zara laughed. "Not bad at all."

"The best discoveries happen when you are curious enough to look." — Dr Helen Price

2 Key Vocabulary

Word	Type	Definition	Example
curious	adj	wanting to know or learn more about something	Zara was always curious about hidden places.
basement	noun	the room below ground level in a building	She carried boxes to the school basement.
ancient	adj	very old, from a long time ago	Marcus loved reading about ancient civilisations.
tunnel	noun	an underground passage or path	The tunnel was narrow, dark, and quiet.
whispered	verb	spoke very quietly and softly	"Ready?" Marcus whispered in the dark.
enormous	adj	very large, huge	The underground hall was enormous.
mysterious	adj	strange and difficult to understand or explain	Mrs Walker was mysteriously busy all week.
flickered	verb	shone with an unsteady, moving light	The torch flickered in the cold air.
courage	noun	being brave when something is difficult or scary	It took courage to tell the headteacher.
guardian	noun	a person who protects or watches over something	Dr Price was the guardian of the library.
crumbled	verb	broke into small pieces	The old brick crumbled when Zara touched it.
discovery	noun	finding something for the first time	The library was an incredible discovery.
passage	noun	a long, narrow way through something	A stone passage led deep underground.
sealed	adj	closed tightly so nothing can get in or out	The library had been sealed for over 100 years.
treasures	noun	very valuable and important things	The books were treasures worth protecting.

3 Fill in the Blanks

Choose the correct word to complete each sentence.

1. Zara was _____ — she always wanted to know more about everything.
2. She found the map inside a wall in the school _____.
3. The map showed _____ under the city streets.
4. "Look at this!" Marcus _____ in the dark tunnel.
5. The underground library was _____ — it was bigger than their school.
6. The library had been _____ for over a hundred years.
7. Dr Price was the _____ of the library for fifty years.
8. The books in the library were real _____ — priceless and beautiful.
9. It took a lot of _____ for Zara to tell the headteacher about the library.
10. The library was the most amazing _____ in the city's history.

Answer Key:

1. curious
2. basement
3. tunnels
4. whispered
5. enormous
6. sealed
7. guardian
8. treasures
9. courage
10. discovery

4 Comprehension Quiz

Choose the correct answer for each question.

1. Where did Zara find the map?

- A) In a library book
- B) Inside a wall in the school basement
- C) In her locker
- D) On the internet

2. Why did Zara have to go to the basement every Thursday?

- A) She had detention
- B) She helped the caretaker carry boxes
- C) She had a secret meeting
- D) She was hiding from someone

3. What did Marcus bring to the tunnels?

- A) A compass and a camera
- B) A notebook and a ball of string
- C) Food and water
- D) A sword and a shield

4. What did Zara and Marcus find at the end of the tunnel?

- A) A treasure chest
- B) An underground swimming pool
- C) An enormous underground library
- D) An old train station

5. Who was Dr Helen Price?

- A) A teacher at Westfield School
- B) The guardian of the library
- C) Zara's grandmother
- D) A city council member

6. How long had Dr Price been looking after the library?

- A) Ten years
- B) Twenty years
- C) Over fifty years
- D) Over a hundred years

7. Why was the library built underground?

- A) To hide gold and jewels
- B) To protect books from wars and fires
- C) Because there was no space above ground
- D) Because it was cooler underground

8. What was Zara's idea for the library?

- A) Keep it secret forever
- B) Sell the books to museums
- C) Make it an official public library with proper access

D) Move all the books to the school

9. Who did Zara talk to about the library?

- A) Her parents first
- B) The police
- C) The school headteacher, Mrs Walker
- D) A newspaper reporter

10. What is the main message of the story?

- A) Old buildings are dangerous
- B) Curiosity and courage can lead to amazing discoveries
- C) Secrets should always be kept
- D) Libraries are boring places

5 Quiz Answer Key

Q	Correct Answer
1	B) Inside a wall in the school basement
2	B) She helped the caretaker carry boxes
3	B) A notebook and a ball of string
4	C) An enormous underground library
5	B) The guardian of the library
6	C) Over fifty years
7	B) To protect books from wars and fires
8	C) Make it an official public library with proper access
9	C) The school headteacher, Mrs Walker
10	B) Curiosity and courage can lead to amazing discoveries