

The Secret Map of Midnight City

A Fleydo English School Story

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

Zara is a fourteen-year-old girl who loves books more than social media. One day, she finds a mysterious hand-drawn map hidden in an old bookshop. The map shows secret places in her town that nobody knows about — a hidden garden, an underground tunnel with paintings, and an abandoned theatre. Together with her friend Tomasz, Zara follows the clues and discovers the incredible story of Elena Voss, a woman who spent her life creating beauty in hidden places. Now Zara must decide: will she become the new keeper of Midnight City?

Learning Objectives

- Read and understand an A2-level mystery story (14 pages)
- Learn 22 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, hidden beauty, and responsibility

1 Read the Story

Chapter 1: The Old Bookshop

Zara finds something unexpected between the pages

Zara walked past the old bookshop on Park Street every day after school. It was a small, dusty shop with dark green paint on the door and towers of books in the window. A sign above the door said "Mr Kemal's Books — Open Since 1962." Most teenagers walked past without looking, but Zara always stopped.

She was fourteen years old, tall with dark curly hair and curious brown eyes. Her friends thought she was strange because she preferred books to social media. "You're always reading," her best friend Tomasz said. "Don't you get bored?"

"Books are never boring," Zara replied. "They're doors to places you can't visit on a bus."

Today was different. Today, Mr Kemal had put a box outside the shop with a sign: "FREE — Old books, need a good home." Zara knelt down and looked through the box. Most books were damaged or had missing pages. But at the bottom, under a heavy cookbook, there was a thin blue book with no title on the cover.

Zara opened it. Inside was not a story. It was a hand-drawn map. The streets looked familiar — they looked like her own town. But the map showed places that Zara did not recognise: a hidden garden behind the library, a tunnel under the bridge, and a building marked with a gold star and the words "Midnight City."

"Interesting," Zara whispered. She put the book in her bag and walked home.

Chapter 2: The First Clue

Zara and Tomasz follow the map to a hidden place

The next morning, Zara showed the map to Tomasz before school. He studied it carefully. Tomasz was good at puzzles and codes. He wore glasses, had short blond hair, and always carried a notebook in his back pocket.

"This is definitely our town," he said, pointing at the map. "Look — there's the school, and there's the river. But what's this?" He pointed at a dotted line that led from the library to a small square marked "The Hidden Garden."

"I don't know," Zara said. "But I want to find out."

After school, they went to the library. It was a big Victorian building made of red bricks. They walked around the back, where nobody ever went. There was a tall stone wall covered in ivy.

"The map shows a gate here," Tomasz said, looking at the drawing. He pushed the ivy aside. Behind the leaves, there was a small wooden gate, painted green and almost invisible against the wall.

"No way," Zara breathed. She pushed the gate. It opened with a loud creak. Behind it was a garden — not big, but beautiful. There were roses, a stone bench, and a fountain that was not working. Everything was overgrown and wild, as if nobody had visited for years.

In the centre of the garden, on the stone bench, there was an envelope. It was old and yellow. Zara picked it up with shaking hands. Inside was a small card. Written in neat handwriting were the words: "Well done, explorer. You found the first place. But Midnight City has many secrets. Follow the river to the bridge at sunset. Look for the symbol of the star."

Zara and Tomasz looked at each other. This was not just an old map. It was a treasure hunt. Somebody had created it, and somebody wanted it to be found.

Chapter 3: Under the Bridge

A discovery in the dark

At six o'clock, the sun was low and orange. Zara and Tomasz stood at the old stone bridge. The river below was dark and slow. Nobody else was around.

"The note said to look for a star symbol," Tomasz reminded her. They searched the bridge carefully — the stones, the railings, the steps going down to the water.

"Here!" Zara called. On the side of the bridge, near the water, someone had carved a small star into the stone. It was old and covered with green moss, but it was definitely a star.

Tomasz pressed the star. Nothing happened. He pushed harder. Suddenly, a section of the wall moved — a narrow opening appeared, just wide enough for a person to walk through.

"The tunnel from the map!" Zara said. "It's real!" They turned on their torches and stepped inside. The tunnel was cold and damp. Water dripped from the ceiling. Their footsteps echoed in the darkness.

After about five minutes of walking, the tunnel opened into a small underground room. The walls were made of old brick, and in the centre of the room was a wooden table. On the table was a lantern, a rolled-up piece of paper, and another envelope.

Tomasz lit the lantern. The warm yellow light filled the room and Zara could see something amazing: the walls were covered with paintings. Not modern paintings — old ones. Paintings of the town from hundreds of years ago.

Zara unrolled the piece of paper. It was another map — more detailed than the one from the bookshop. This one showed the whole underground network. She opened the envelope. Inside was another card: "You are brave and curious. Midnight City was built by people who believed that every town needs hidden beauty. One more step remains. Find the old theatre. Go at midnight."

Chapter 4: The Old Theatre

Secrets behind a locked door

The old theatre on Queen Street had been closed for fifteen years. The windows were covered with wooden boards, and the front door was locked with a heavy chain. A faded poster still hung on the wall: "The Midnight Players — Final Show, June 2011."

Zara and Tomasz stood outside at 11:45 pm. Zara had told her parents she was sleeping at a friend's house. She felt guilty about the lie, but she couldn't stop now.

They found a side entrance through the alley — a small door with a tiny gold star painted on the handle. Inside, the theatre was dark and quiet. Their torches revealed rows of red velvet seats, a big stage with heavy curtains, and a beautiful painted ceiling with clouds and stars.

"It's magnificent," Zara said. On the stage, they found a large wooden box. Inside was not gold or jewels. It was something better. There were letters — dozens of them. Letters from people who had loved the theatre. And there was a large notebook with a leather cover.

Zara opened the notebook. On the first page, in beautiful handwriting, it said: "My name is Elena Voss. I am the founder of Midnight City. I created the map, the garden, the tunnel, and this theatre because I believe that every town needs secret places — places where people can dream, create, and be free. If you are reading this, then you are the new keeper of Midnight City."

Chapter 5: Elena's Story

The woman who built a secret world

Zara and Tomasz sat on the theatre stage and read Elena's notebook by lantern light. Elena Voss had been an artist and teacher who lived in the town seventy years ago. She loved the town but thought it was too grey and serious.

"People rush through their days," Elena wrote. "They don't stop to notice beauty. So I decided to create beauty in hidden places. Places that only the curious would find."

Elena had planted the garden behind the library in 1958. She had discovered the old tunnel under the bridge and turned it into a secret art gallery. She had saved the theatre from destruction in 1975 and filled it with music and art for thirty years.

There was one more page in the notebook: "I put the map in Mr Kemal's bookshop last week. He is my oldest friend and he promised to put it where a young reader would find it. I hope it finds someone special."

Chapter 6: Meeting Elena

Zara meets the creator of Midnight City

The next day, Zara went back to Mr Kemal's bookshop. "Ah," the old man said, smiling. "You found it, didn't you?"

"She asked me to put the map where a young person would find it," Mr Kemal explained. "She said the next keeper of Midnight City had to be young, curious, and brave." He wrote an address on a piece of paper. "She lives on Elm Street. Number fourteen. She's expecting you."

That afternoon, Zara and Tomasz knocked on the door of number fourteen, Elm Street. A woman in her eighties opened the door. She had white hair, bright blue eyes, and a warm smile. She wore a paint-stained apron.

"Come in, come in," Elena said. "I've been waiting for you."

Chapter 7: The New Keepers

Zara and Tomasz accept a special responsibility

Elena's house was full of paintings, books, and strange objects from her travels. She made them tea and served homemade cake. Then she told them everything.

"Midnight City is not just about secret places," Elena explained. "It's about the idea that beauty exists everywhere, if you look for it. I created those places because I wanted people to be curious — to explore, to discover, to pay attention to the world around them."

"But why 'Midnight City'?" Tomasz asked. "Because midnight is when the ordinary world sleeps and the extraordinary world wakes up," Elena said. "The hidden garden, the tunnel gallery, the theatre — they exist in the same town as your school and the supermarket. But most people never see them."

"I'm eighty-three years old now," Elena continued. "I can't climb into tunnels or fix the fountain. I need someone to continue what I started." She took a golden key from a drawer. "This opens every secret door in Midnight City. It's yours now."

Zara took the key. "We'll take care of it," she said. "And we'll make it even better," Tomasz added.

That evening, walking home under the stars, Zara looked at the town differently. The same streets, the same buildings — but now she knew there was a whole secret world underneath. A world of art, beauty, and wonder, waiting to be shared.

"Every town has secrets. You just have to be curious enough to find them." — Elena Voss

2 Key Vocabulary

These words from the story will help you improve your English.

Word	Type	Definition	Example
dusty	adj	covered with a thin layer of dirt or dust	<i>It was a small, dusty shop with towers of books.</i>
map	noun	a drawing that shows streets, buildings, or places	<i>Inside the book was a hand-drawn map.</i>
recognise	verb	know or identify something you have seen before	<i>The map showed places Zara did not recognise.</i>
tunnel	noun	a long underground passage	<i>The map showed a tunnel under the bridge.</i>
notebook	noun	a small book for writing notes	<i>Tomasz always carried a notebook in his pocket.</i>
invisible	adj	impossible to see	<i>The gate was almost invisible against the wall.</i>
envelope	noun	a flat paper cover for a letter	<i>On the bench there was an old envelope.</i>
treasure	noun	something very valuable or precious	<i>This was not just a map. It was a treasure hunt.</i>
definitely	adv	without any doubt; for certain	<i>It was definitely a star carved into the stone.</i>
narrow	adj	not wide; thin or small in width	<i>A narrow opening appeared in the wall.</i>
lantern	noun	a lamp you can carry, often with glass sides	<i>On the table was an old lantern.</i>
detailed	adj	having a lot of information and small parts	<i>This map was more detailed than the first one.</i>
guilty	adj	feeling bad because you did something wrong	<i>Zara felt guilty about lying to her parents.</i>
magnificent	adj	extremely beautiful and impressive	<i>The theatre was magnificent inside.</i>
ordinary	adj	normal; not special or different	<i>Midnight is when the ordinary world sleeps.</i>
create	verb	make something new that did not exist before	<i>Elena decided to create beauty in hidden places.</i>
keeper	noun	a person who looks after or protects something	<i>Zara became the new keeper of Midnight City.</i>
address	noun	the number and name of the street where someone lives	<i>Mr Kemal wrote an address on a piece of paper.</i>
homemade	adj	made at home, not bought from a shop	<i>Elena served homemade cake with tea.</i>
explained	verb	made something clear and easy to understand	<i>Elena explained the meaning of Midnight City.</i>
curious	adj	wanting to learn or know more about something	<i>Zara was always curious about the world.</i>

extraordinary	adj	very unusual, special, and surprising	<i>Midnight is when the extraordinary world wakes up.</i>
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3 Fill in the Blanks

Choose the correct word to complete each sentence.

1. The old bookshop was _____ and full of old books.
2. Zara found a hand-drawn _____ inside a thin blue book.
3. Behind the ivy, there was a gate that was almost _____.
4. Inside the envelope, there was a clue about a _____ hunt.
5. The tunnel under the bridge was cold, dark, and very _____.
6. They found an old _____ on the table that gave them light.
7. The old theatre was _____ with its painted ceiling and red seats.
8. Elena wanted to _____ hidden beauty in the town.
9. Zara became the new _____ of Midnight City.
10. Zara was _____ about the world and always wanted to explore.

Answer Key:

1. dusty
2. map
3. invisible
4. treasure
5. narrow
6. lantern
7. magnificent
8. create
9. keeper
10. curious

4 Comprehension Quiz

Choose the correct answer for each question.

Question 1. Where did Zara find the map?

- A. In her school bag
- B. In a box of free books outside Mr Kemal's shop
- C. In the library
- D. On the internet

Question 2. What did the map show?

- A. A treasure on an island
- B. Hidden places in Zara's town
- C. A way to another country
- D. A secret school

Question 3. What was behind the ivy at the library?

- A. A window
- B. A green gate to a hidden garden
- C. A cat
- D. A sign

Question 4. What symbol did they look for at the bridge?

- A. A heart
- B. A moon
- C. A star
- D. An arrow

Question 5. What was inside the underground room?

- A. A swimming pool
- B. Nothing — it was empty
- C. Paintings, a table, and a lantern
- D. A monster

Question 6. Why did Zara feel guilty about going to the theatre?

- A. She stole the map
- B. She lied to her parents
- C. She broke a window
- D. She didn't invite Tomasz

Question 7. What did Elena Voss create Midnight City for?

- A. To hide treasure
- B. To create hidden beauty that curious people would find
- C. To play tricks on people
- D. To make money

Question 8. How did Elena choose the next keeper?

- A. She held a competition
- B. She put a map in a bookshop and waited
- C. She asked her family
- D. She posted online

Question 9. What did Elena give Zara?

- A. Money
- B. A golden key
- C. A painting

D. A new map

Question 10. What is the main message of the story?

- A. Old buildings are dangerous
- B. Curiosity reveals hidden beauty in the world
- C. Maps are always correct
- D. Teenagers should not explore alone

5 Quiz Answer Key

Q	Correct Answer
1	B. In a box of free books outside Mr Kemal's shop
2	B. Hidden places in Zara's town
3	B. A green gate to a hidden garden
4	C. A star
5	C. Paintings, a table, and a lantern
6	B. She lied to her parents
7	B. To create hidden beauty that curious people would find
8	B. She put a map in a bookshop and waited
9	B. A golden key
10	B. Curiosity reveals hidden beauty in the world