

The Painter Who Stole the Sky

A Fleydo English School Story

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

Lena is a sixteen-year-old girl living in Greyhill, a fading mountain town where the mines have closed and colour has drained away. When mysterious, breathtaking murals begin appearing overnight on abandoned buildings, the whole town is captivated. Lena sets out to discover who the mystery artist is, and the answer changes her life forever.

Learning Objectives

- Read and understand an A2-level mystery story (16 pages)
- Learn 39 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: art, courage, community, and honouring memory

1 Read the Story

Chapter 1

The Grey Town

Lena lives in a place where nothing ever happens

Lena was sixteen years old and she lived in Greyhill, a small town in the mountains. The name was perfect for it. The buildings were grey. The sky was often grey. Even the people seemed grey sometimes — tired, quiet, and ordinary.

Greyhill had once been a busy mining town. Trains had carried coal and iron through the valley every day. But the mines closed twenty years ago, and now the town was slowly dying. Young people left as soon as they could. Shops closed. The old train station stood abandoned at the edge of town, its windows dark and its platform covered in weeds.

Lena lived with her father above his small repair shop. Her mother had died when Lena was nine. Her father fixed broken things — kettles, radios, bicycles, clocks. He was a quiet man who spoke more to machines than to people.

Lena was quiet too. She was tall and thin, with dark hair that she always wore in a long braid. She was good at school, especially at art, but she didn't have many friends. She spent most of her time drawing in a sketchbook that she carried everywhere.

She drew the mountains, the old buildings, the clouds. But mostly she drew things she imagined — cities she had never visited, forests that didn't exist, animals made of stars and smoke.

"You have a good imagination," her art teacher, Mrs. Berger, told her. "But you need to be braver. Show people what you see."

Lena shook her head. She wasn't brave. She was the opposite of brave.



Chapter 2

The First Mural

Something impossible appears overnight

It happened on a Monday morning in October. Lena was walking to school when she noticed a group of people standing near the old train station. They were pointing at something and talking excitedly.

Lena walked closer. Then she stopped and stared. On the side wall of the station — a wall that had been plain grey concrete — there was now an enormous painting. A mural. It showed a night sky filled with stars, and below the stars, the town of Greyhill. But not the grey Greyhill that Lena knew. In the painting, the buildings were glowing with warm colours — gold, amber, soft pink.

It was stunning. It was like looking through a window into another world — a world where Greyhill was magical.

“Who did this?” someone asked. “Nobody knows,” said old Mr. Fischer, who ran the bakery. “It wasn’t there last night at ten.”

At school, everyone was talking about the mural. Some students thought it was a professional artist from the city. Others thought it was a marketing campaign.

At lunchtime, Lena went back to the station alone. The style was unique — part realistic, part dreamlike, with tiny hidden details. In the corner of the sky, she found a small symbol — a crescent moon with a paintbrush through it. She copied it in her sketchbook.

“I’m going to find out who you are,” she whispered to the wall.

Chapter 3

The Second Painting

The mystery deepens

Three days later, a second mural appeared. This time on the old community centre. The painting showed children playing in a garden full of exotic flowers. Butterflies the size of birds flew between enormous sunflowers. A fountain sprayed water that turned into tiny birds.

The town was completely fascinated. The local newspaper wrote an article: “Mystery Artist Transforms Greyhill.” People from neighbouring towns drove to see the murals. The bakery sold more bread in one week than it usually sold in a month.

But the mayor, Mr. Kessler, was furious. “This is vandalism!” he said at a town meeting. “Someone is painting on buildings without permission. I want the police to find this person.”

Lena understood both sides. The artist was painting without permission. But the paintings were beautiful, and they were making people happy. For the first time in years, people in Greyhill were excited about something.

She studied the mural with her artist’s eye. The technique was extraordinary. And the flowers were specific types — Alpine flowers that only grew in these mountains. Edelweiss, gentian, Alpine rose.

This wasn’t someone from Berlin. This was someone from Greyhill.

Chapter 4

The Night Watch

Lena decides to find the truth

Lena decided to catch the artist. Every night that week, she sneaked out after midnight and walked through the town. On Monday and Tuesday, nothing happened. On Wednesday, at two in the morning, she heard a soft scraping sound behind the old pharmacy.

Her heart pounding, Lena crept closer. A figure stood on a wooden ladder, painting by the light of a lamp attached to their forehead. They wore dark clothes and moved confidently, their arm sweeping across the wall.

Lena watched, mesmerised. The painting was taking shape — the old train station as it might have looked a hundred years ago, alive with people and steam and colour.

Then her phone buzzed. The figure on the ladder froze. They turned, packed their supplies quickly, and disappeared around the corner. Lena ran after them, but the street was empty.

She walked to the half-finished mural. In the dim light, the old station glowed with warmth and life. And in the corner, still wet, was the crescent moon symbol.

Chapter 5

The Discovery

The truth is closer than Lena expected

The next morning, Lena was tired but determined. The artist was fast, knew the town well, and used professional-quality paint. She went to the hardware store. Nobody had been buying paint. Dead end.

But then she remembered: the artist had used a wooden folding ladder. She had seen one exactly like it in her father's repair shop, in the back room.

She went home and checked the ladder. The third step was cracked but taped together. She looked at her father's hands. They were clean. But under his fingernails, if she looked carefully, she could see tiny traces of colour. Purple. Gold. Pink.

That night, at one in the morning, she heard a door. She looked out her window. A figure was walking away from the shop, carrying a rucksack and the folding ladder. He walked quickly, staying in the shadows.

It was her father.

Chapter 6

The Conversation

Father and daughter finally talk

Lena confronted her father the next evening. "Dad. I know it's you. The murals. The mystery artist. It's you."

He put down his cup and sighed. "How did you find out?" "The ladder. And the paint under your fingernails." He chuckled. "I thought I was being so careful."

“Do you remember your mother?” he asked. “She was an artist. She painted every day. She used to say that every grey town deserved a little colour.”

Lena felt tears forming. She remembered her mother at an easel by the window, painting the mountains.

“When she died, I stopped everything,” he continued. “I couldn’t paint. I couldn’t even look at colours. So I buried it. I fixed grey things. Safe things.”

“What changed?” “You did. I saw your sketchbook. The creatures made of stars, the impossible cities. You have your mother’s gift. And I thought — if I don’t do something, you’ll bury it too.”

“You painted the murals... for me?” “For you. For the town. For your mother. I wanted to inspire you to share your art.”

Lena laughed. And then she cried. And then she hugged her father for the first time in a very long time.

Chapter 7

The Sky Painting

Lena becomes brave

A fifth mural appeared on the water tower, the tallest structure in Greyhill. It showed a vast sunset sky — every colour from deep violet to burning gold. Below, tiny recognisable figures of the townspeople stood together, looking up.

“It’s like he stole the sky and gave it to us,” someone said.

That afternoon, Lena did the bravest thing she had ever done. She went to Mrs. Berger and said, “I want to do an exhibition. My drawings. Here at school.”

She spent two weeks selecting and framing thirty pieces. The exhibition opened on a Friday evening. People came. Lots of people. They walked past her drawings, and their faces changed from curiosity to wonder.

“These are remarkable,” the mayor said. “We need more of this in Greyhill. Maybe this town needs art more than it needs rules.”

Mrs. Berger announced that the council had agreed to commission Lena to design a new mural for the town hall.

Her father was standing by the window, looking at her drawings. His eyes were shining. He gave her a small nod.

That night, Lena opened her sketchbook to a fresh page and started designing the mural. It would show Greyhill not as it was, and not as it had been, but as it could be. Full of colour, full of life, full of the sky.

Every grey town deserves a little colour.
— *Lena's mother*



2 Key Vocabulary

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

Word	Type	Definition	Example from Story
ordinary	adj	normal; not special or different	<i>The people seemed ordinary.</i>
abandoned	adj	left empty; no longer used	<i>The train station stood abandoned.</i>
sketchbook	noun	a book of blank pages for drawing	<i>Lena carried a sketchbook everywhere.</i>
imagined	verb	created pictures in your mind	<i>She drew things she imagined.</i>
imagination	noun	the ability to create ideas in your mind	<i>You have a good imagination.</i>
enormous	adj	extremely large; very big	<i>There was an enormous painting.</i>
stunning	adj	extremely beautiful and impressive	<i>The mural was stunning.</i>
professional	adj	very skilled; doing something as a job	<i>Some thought it was a professional artist.</i>
unique	adj	the only one of its kind	<i>The style was unique.</i>
realistic	adj	showing things as they really look	<i>The painting was part realistic.</i>
exotic	adj	unusual, often from a far-away place	<i>A garden full of exotic flowers.</i>
artist	noun	a person who creates art	<i>Nobody knew who the artist was.</i>
fascinated	adj	very strongly interested	<i>The town was fascinated.</i>
furious	adj	extremely angry	<i>The mayor was furious.</i>
vandalism	noun	deliberately damaging property	<i>He called it vandalism.</i>
permission	noun	official agreement to do something	<i>Painting without permission.</i>
excited	adj	feeling very happy and interested	<i>People were excited.</i>
technique	noun	a way of doing something needing skill	<i>The technique was extraordinary.</i>
specific	adj	particular; clearly defined	<i>They were specific types of flowers.</i>
scraping	noun	a rough, scratching sound	<i>She heard a scraping sound.</i>
pounding	adj	beating very hard and fast	<i>Her heart was pounding.</i>
attached	adj	fixed or connected to something	<i>A lamp attached to their forehead.</i>
confidently	adv	showing belief in your abilities	<i>They moved confidently.</i>
mesmerised	adj	so impressed you cannot think	<i>Lena watched, mesmerised.</i>

disappeared	verb	went away; could not be seen	<i>The figure disappeared.</i>
determined	adj	having a strong feeling to do something	<i>Lena was determined.</i>
repairing	verb	fixing something broken	<i>He was repairing a clock.</i>
figure	nou n	the shape of a person	<i>A figure stood on a ladder.</i>
confronted	verb	spoke directly about something difficult	<i>Lena confronted her father.</i>
chuckled	verb	laughed quietly and softly	<i>He chuckled at her discovery.</i>
abstracts	nou n	paintings using shapes not real things	<i>She painted abstracts.</i>
creatures	nou n	living or imaginary beings	<i>Creatures made of stars.</i>
inspire	verb	give desire to do something creative	<i>He wanted to inspire Lena.</i>
structure	nou n	a building or large construction	<i>The tallest structure in town.</i>
recognisable	adj	easy to identify	<i>The figures were recognisable.</i>
selecting	verb	choosing carefully	<i>She spent weeks selecting her art.</i>
especially	adv	more than usual	<i>Drawings made especially for the show.</i>
remarkable	adj	very unusual or impressive	<i>These are remarkable, said the mayor.</i>
commission	verb	officially ask to create something	<i>The council commissioned a mural.</i>

3 Fill in the Blanks

Choose the correct word to complete each sentence.

Word Bank: abandoned | stunning | furious | fascinated | determined | mesmerised | disappeared | confronted | inspire | commission

1. The old train station had been _____ for twenty years.
2. The painting on the wall was absolutely _____ — everyone stopped to look.
3. The mayor was _____ because someone was painting without permission.
4. The whole town was _____ by the mystery of the painter.
5. Lena was _____ to find out who the artist was.
6. She watched, completely _____, as the figure painted the wall.
7. The artist _____ around the corner before Lena could see their face.
8. Lena _____ her father about the paintings.
9. Her father wanted to _____ Lena to share her own art.
10. The council decided to _____ Lena to design a new mural.

Answer Key

1. **abandoned**
2. **stunning**
3. **furious**
4. **fascinated**
5. **determined**
6. **mesmerised**
7. **disappeared**
8. **confronted**
9. **inspire**
10. **commission**

4 Comprehension Quiz

Choose the correct answer for each question.

Question 1. What kind of town is Greyhill?

- A) A busy city by the sea
- B) A small, quiet mountain town where the mines closed
- C) A farming village in the south
- D) A modern town with many shops

Question 2. What does Lena like to do in her free time?

- A) Play sports
- B) Read science books
- C) Draw in her sketchbook
- D) Cook for her father

Question 3. What appeared on the old train station wall?

- A) A political poster
- B) An enormous mural showing Greyhill full of colour
- C) A map of the town
- D) A list of names

Question 4. How did the mayor react to the murals?

- A) He was happy and praised them
- B) He didn't care at all
- C) He was furious and called it vandalism
- D) He claimed he painted them

Question 5. How did Lena try to find the mystery artist?

- A) She asked the police
- B) She posted online
- C) She sneaked out at night and watched the streets
- D) She hired a detective

Question 6. What clue helped Lena discover the artist's identity?

- A) She found a signed painting
- B) Someone told her
- C) She recognised the ladder and saw paint under his nails
- D) She saw a newspaper photograph

Question 7. Why did Lena's father paint the murals?

- A) To make money
- B) To become famous
- C) To honour his wife's memory and inspire Lena
- D) Because the mayor asked him

Question 8. What was special about the community centre flowers?

- A) They were tropical flowers
- B) They were Alpine flowers from those mountains
- C) They were black and white
- D) They were copied from a famous painting

Question 9. What brave thing did Lena do?

- A) She told the police about her father
- B) She ran away from home
- C) She organised an exhibition of her own drawings
- D) She painted her own mural at night

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

- A) Breaking rules is always acceptable
- B) Art can transform places and people, and sharing creativity takes courage
- C) Small towns are boring
- D) Parents should keep secrets from children

5 Quiz Answer Key

Q	Correct Answer
1	B) A small, quiet mountain town where the mines closed
2	C) Draw in her sketchbook
3	B) An enormous mural showing Greyhill full of colour
4	C) He was furious and called it vandalism
5	C) She sneaked out at night and watched the streets
6	C) She recognised the ladder and saw paint under his nails
7	C) To honour his wife's memory and inspire Lena
8	B) They were Alpine flowers from those mountains
9	C) She organised an exhibition of her own drawings
10	B) Art can transform places and people, and sharing creativity takes courage

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“Every grey town deserves a little colour.”

— Lena’s mother