

What's included?

Themed
short story

Escape room
puzzle to
solve

Short Story Escape Room

Hero's Journey

Part 3 - Crossing the Threshold

A hero cannot remain in the ordinary world forever. Read carefully to discover the moment Elias leaves everything he has ever known behind.

Elias spent the next three days preparing for the journey. Although he tried to go about daily life in the town, his thoughts constantly drifted to the silver key and the map Agnes had shown him.

On the morning of his departure, the sky was painted with shades of pink and gold. The village was beginning to wake as Elias stood at the front door of his family cottage, his travel pack resting at his feet.

"You don't need to be fearless to be brave," his grandmother said softly as she wrapped him in a tight hug. "Bravery means moving forward when you're afraid."

Elias' mother wiped a tear from her eye, and his father clasped his shoulder. Then, with only his pack, Elias set forth.

Word had spread that the Realm of Auralis was in danger. Familiar faces waved him farewell as he walked through the town square, many surprised to see that it was Elias who called to be the hero. The baker handed him a loaf of bread for the journey, and the blacksmith wished him good fortune.

Elias walked steadily past the Whisperwood to the edge of Brindle Hollow. He reached the Iron Gate, a towering stone archway that marked the boundary between village lands and untamed wilderness.

Naturally, he had wondered what was beyond the boundary. But never had Elias dreamed he would cross the threshold. The silver compass spun suddenly and began to glow. It pointed directly through the archway.

Beyond the gate, towering trees seemed to hold countless secrets as the wilderness expanded further than Elias could see.

Doubt crept into his mind, weaving its way around the hope he had set out with. What if he wasn't the hero the realm needed? What if he failed straight away?

The silver key pulsed bright blue light. Elias took a deep breath and stepped through the Iron Gate. At once, the air felt different as the sounds of the village faded behind him. Birdsong echoed among the trees, and strange paths twisted before him.

There was no turning back now. Intense emotions churned within his mind and body as he prepared to cross the threshold. Elias gulped as he left the ordinary world behind him.

s	r	u	e	n	u	
o	s	v	n	e	r	u
i	b	d	e	b		

Puzzle question: What emotions does Elias experience? Unscramble the words in the table.

Answer: u _____, n _____, b _____

Short Story Escape Room

Student Answer Sheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

THE HERO'S KEY

Write the answer in the spaces below. Write the highlighted letter in the correct part of the secret word.

Part One Answer	Part Two Answer	Part Three Answer	Part Four Answer
Part Five Answer	Part Six Answer	Part Seven Answer	Part Eight Answer

THE SECRET WORD: reveal the word on the Crystal Gate

Part 3	Part 2	Part 5	Part 1	Part 7	Part 6	Part 8	Part 4
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Teaching notes

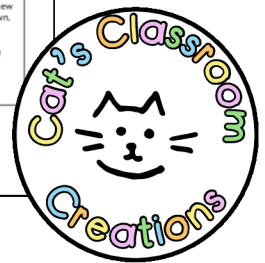
Extension
activities

Read about the structure and elements of the story. Color the symbol when you have read the part.

Part 5	The Approach	
The hero travels closer to the place where the greatest challenge awaits. During this stage, they gather information, make plans, and prepare for what is to come. Tension builds as the hero realises the final test is getting closer.		Key Elements: - Preparing for the final challenge - Discovering important clues - Growing suspense
Part 6	The Ordeal	
The ordeal is the most difficult part of the Hero's Journey. The hero faces their greatest fear, makes a difficult choice, or experiences a major setback. Although it may seem like all hope is lost, this moment helps the hero become stronger and wiser.		Key Elements: - The biggest challenge - Danger or sacrifice - Courage under pressure - Personal growth
Part 7	The Reward	
After overcoming the ordeal, the hero earns a reward. This could be a magical object, valuable knowledge, or a new understanding of themselves. The reward is more than just a prize—it shows how the hero has changed because of the journey.		Key Elements: - Success after struggle - Treasure, knowledge, or wisdom - Increased confidence
Part 8	The Return	
The hero returns home, but they are no longer the same person they were at the beginning of the story. They bring back something valuable that helps others, such as hope, peace, knowledge, or courage. The journey is complete, and the hero's growth becomes the greatest reward of all.		Key Elements: - Returning home - Solving the original problem - Sharing lessons - A changed and wiser hero

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Design a hero crest Every hero has a symbol that represents who they are. Design a shield or crest for Elias after he completes his journey. Include: - a symbol for courage - a symbol for wisdom - a symbol for friendship - a personal motto Extension: Explain why you chose each symbol.	Continue the story The Crystal Gate has been restored... or has it? Write the next chapter of Elias's story (250-400 words). Perhaps: - a new threat appears - another magical gate is discovered - Lucie receives her own mysterious quest - the silver bird returns with another message Try to include dialogue, descriptive language, and a cliffhanger ending.	Diary entry Choose ONE character: - Elias - Lucie - Agnes Write a diary entry about one important event in the story. Remember to include: - thoughts - feelings - hopes - fears Write in first person.	Escape room puzzle Imagine you are creating Chapter 9. Create a brand-new escape room puzzle using the story. Ideas include: - crossword - cipher - maze - word search - riddle - logic puzzle - codebreaker Include an answer key.	Build a world map Create a detailed map of Auralis. Include places from the story: - Brindle Hollow - Whisperwood - Ela's Tower - Mountains of Ashenfall - Crystal Gate - Heart of Auralis Add at least three new locations of your own. Write a short description for each place.
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Why you'll love it.



Easy to read short story



Engaging comprehension practice



Unique reading activity



Perfect for independent reading



Digital and printable

Short Story Escape Room **Part 2 - Meeting the Mentor**

Every hero needs guidance before stepping into the unknown. Read carefully to discover who helps Elias understand the true meaning of the crystal key.

Hero's Journey

The morning after the silver bird had appeared, Elias could think of little else. The crystal key rested on the wooden table beside his bed. Throughout the night, it had pulsed with a faint blue glow.

Outside, Brindle Hollow seemed unchanged. Villagers swept leaves from their doorsteps, and merchants checked their market stalls for damage from the storm. Elias walked through the main square, clasping the key in his pocket, guarding it like a precious secret.

The Heart of Auralis was fading. The Crystal Gate needed restoring. Why had he been chosen to learn about this?

Determined to find answers, Elias made his way beyond the town to the edge of the Whisperwood forest.

Elias pulled his coat tight as the tall pine trees swayed in an icy breeze. He pushed through a doorway of tangling vines and stepped into the clearing where an ancient stone tower stood.

The tower belonged to Agnes, the village's oldest resident. Some people called her a scholar; others, a magician. Mostly, people called her strange. But she was the only person likely to know what the key meant. Elias took a deep breath as he approached the wooden door.

"I was wondering when you would arrive," a voice came from inside as the door swung open, creaking loudly before Elias could knock. He stepped inside, feeling uncertain.

Agnes stood by the windowsill, tending to potted herbs. Books filled every shelf around the room from floor to ceiling, and strange maps and star charts covered a large wooden table. Her silver hair fell in a braid down her back, and sharp green eyes observed Elias.

"You have the key," she stated. Elias nodded, revealing it from his pocket. Agnes pulled a map from one of the many bookshelves in the room. She unrolled and stretched it across the table. She pointed to the middle, where jagged mountains, dark forests, and golden sand dunes surrounded a shining city. "That is the Realm of Auralis," Agnes whispered. "The key appears when it is in danger."

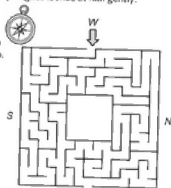
Elias stared at the map, fear rising in his body. The journey looked impossible. How was he supposed to reach the city? Agnes looked at him gently.

"Take this," she reached into a wooden chest and showed Elias a silver compass. "It belonged to a hero who walked this path many years ago. It will keep you safe."

Agnes placed the compass on the map. The needle spun rapidly before it settled on a direction, giving the starting point for Elias' journey.

Puzzle question: Which direction does Elias need to go? Complete the maze.

Answer:



THE HERO'S KEY

Healed between rolling green hills and the dense forest known as the Whisperwood, Brindle Hollow was a quiet village. Elias enjoyed the gentle and predictable life he had grown up with. From helping his grandmother tend vegetables in the garden to carrying water from the village well, Elias was content with his life.

In the evenings, Elias enjoyed sitting beneath the ancient oak tree in the village square, where he read stories of adventure in faraway places. He loved the stories, but Elias much preferred his quaint lifestyle to the epic tales of characters on the pages.

One stormy morning, change swept through Brindle Hollow unexpectedly. Dark clouds rolled across the sky and swallowed the last trace of sunlight. The wind howled through the narrow streets, rattling shutters and bending tree branches.

Elias hurried home from the village market, worried about his family. But on the way, he noticed something strange. Perched in the old oak tree, a silver bird clutched a branch with sharp talons. It's bright, dazzling colors stood out in contrast to the darkening sky of the storm.

As Elias stopped, the bird spread out its glittery wings and dropped a small object on the ground. In a flash of dazzling silver, it soared into the storm. Curious, Elias picked up the object.

It was a crystal key. Strange symbols glowed along its surface. Elias squinted to inspect it closer and noticed the symbols spelled out a message.

NOPE, NPAO LEKFPJTO

Suddenly, a whispering voice echoed around him: "The Heart of Auralis is fading. Elias spun around, but no one was there. The balance of the realm is breaking. The Crystal Gate must be restored before the final moonrise."

Elias checked over his shoulder again, but still no one was there. The key shone brightly, projecting an image of distant mountains into the air. Elias stared in amazement. Beyond those mountains lay lands he had only heard about in folklore stories.

As the storm swirled around him, he realized that an adventure had found him, and it was calling him beyond the mountains.

Puzzle question: What is the message on the key? Use the cipher code.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z



Ways to use this product.

- ✓ Independent reading practice
- ✓ Supplement explicit reading strategies
- ✓ Intervention task
- ✓ Homework activity
- ✓ Small group reading

Short Story Escape Room

Part 7 - The Reward

Heroes are often tested before receiving their reward. Read carefully to discover how Elias finds hope when everything seems lost.

Amid the darkness, the valley had fallen silent. Dark mist drifted across the cracked stone ground, and the towering form of the Shadow Keeper stood near the Crystal Gate like a living storm.

Slowly, Elias pushed himself to his feet and looked around for Lucie. She was brushing dust off herself but was unhurt. Elias noticed his body ached from the force of the darkness.

"The key is gone," he admitted to Lucie. As he spoke the words aloud, Elias crumbled, tears forming in his eyes. Without the key, he could not restore the gate. Lucie embraced him in a hug.

"We will find it," she reassured Elias with determination. "We need to get down from this mountain."

The Shadow Keeper began stepping forward in the valley. Each step sent tremors through the land, nudging the rocks in the mountains. Elias and Lucie exchanged a worried glance, knowing they had to move quickly yet avoid being seen.

With swift and steady feet, Elias and Lucie scrambled down the mountain. The Shadow Keeper took another step, sending another rumble through the mountain. A large rock dislodged from the edge and rolled down.

More footsteps, more tremors. The descent down the mountain was challenging. Elias scuffed his foot against a large stone to stop himself from sliding. Then, he saw a flash of green dart across the rocks.

What was Lucie doing? She stopped near a crevice and reached her hand down. As she raised her hand, a beam of silver sparkled. Elias blinked in disbelief. The key! She had found it.

Elias shuffled across to join her, both smiling wide as they clutched the silver key tightly. Safe from the Shadow Keeper, Elias and Lucie surveyed the valley for their next move.

"Look at the stone archway," Elias pointed to three marble stone pillars behind the Crystal Gate. "The symbols seem to spell out a message."

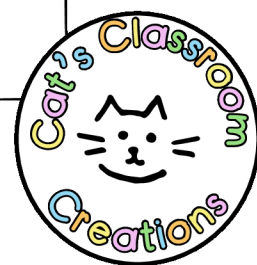
"Let's get closer to read it," Lucie whispered, gesturing forward.

KEY VOCABULARY			
Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4
Perched – sitting on something, usually high above the ground. Summons – a call to come somewhere or do something. Realm – a kingdom or magical land. Restore – to bring something back to its original condition.	Scholar – a person who studies and learns a great deal. Ancient – very old. Realm – a kingdom or magical land. Uncertain – not known or not sure.	Boundary – a line that marks where one area ends and another begins. Untamed – wild and not controlled. Doubt – a feeling of uncertainty or lack of confidence. Fortune – luck or success.	Perched – sitting on something high above the ground. Encounter – a meeting or experience, especially an unexpected one. Vanished – disappeared suddenly. Presence – the feeling that someone or something is nearby.
Part 5	Part 6	Part 7	Part 8
Jagged – rough with sharp points. Ruins – the remains of something that has been destroyed. Daunting – uninviting or threatening. Passage – a section of writing from a book or journal.	Fractures – cracks or breaks in something solid. Surged – moved suddenly and powerfully. Overwhelmed – overcome by strong emotions. Courage – the ability to face fear and continue.	Tremors – small shaking movements in the ground. Embrace – a comforting hold. Determination – a strong decision to keep going despite difficulties. Worthy – deserving respect or success.	Dazzling – extremely bright or impressive. Fragments – small broken pieces of something larger. Restored – brought back to its original condition. Wisdom – the ability to make good decisions using knowledge and experience.

RE THAN POWER.
RIFICES FOR THE

his heart pounded. Was he
fulfil this quest?

F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
V	W	X	Y	Z			



Teach reading!

Engage students in reading comprehension.

Help students find evidence in the text on each page.

Make reading comprehension feel achievable.

Read about the structure and elements of the story. Color the symbol when you have read the part.

Part 1	The Call to Adventure	
Every Hero's Journey begins with a challenge or opportunity that pulls the hero away from their ordinary life. This "call" introduces the main problem of the story and gives the hero a reason to begin their adventure. The hero may feel excited, nervous, or unsure about what lies ahead.	Key Elements: - An ordinary world - A problem or mystery appears - A quest or mission begins	
Part 2	Meeting the Mentor	
Before the hero sets off, they often meet someone wiser and more experienced. The mentor offers advice, teaches an important lesson, or gives the hero a useful object that will help later in the journey. While the mentor provides guidance, the hero must still make their own choices.	Key Elements: - A wise guide - Helpful advice - A magical item, map, or special knowledge	
Part 3	Crossing the Threshold	
This is the moment when the hero leaves the familiar world behind and enters a new and unknown place. Once they cross the threshold, there is no turning back. The real adventure has begun, and the hero must rely on their courage and determination.	Key Elements: - Leaving home - Entering an unfamiliar world - Accepting the challenge	
Part 4	Trials, Allies, and Enemies	
As the journey continues, the hero faces challenges that test their skills, courage, and character. Along the way, they meet helpful allies who support them and enemies who try to stop them. Every challenge teaches the hero something new and helps prepare them for the greatest test ahead.	Key Elements: - Obstacles and challenges - New friendships - Villains or dangerous opponents	

THE HERO'S KEY

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NOFE, NJAO LE<FJJ70

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