

# THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING MUM

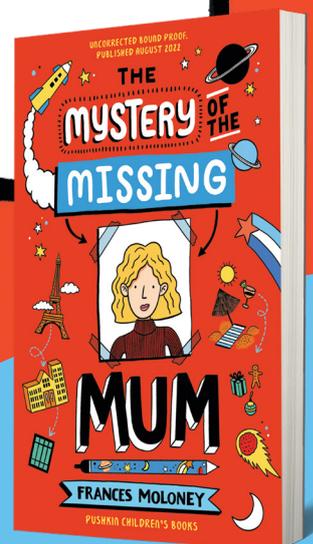
## teachers notes ideas

### THEMES:

- Friendship
- Mental Health
- Unreliable narrators
- Unconventional Families
- Resilience / Hope / Optimism

### GENERAL (STRUCTURE/FORMAT):

- *The Mystery of the Missing Mum* is written in the first person, from the perspective of the main character, Jake. How did this affect your reading of the novel? Did you feel sympathy towards Jake? If so, which parts of the novel made you feel most sympathetic towards his story? Did you feel there were things he wasn't telling you?
- The novel uses flashbacks to reveal aspects of Jake's past that he struggles to remember in the present. How did the flashbacks inform your reading of the novel? Did they help you to piece together the overall story? How did they back up but also contradict Jake's own version of the story?
- Certain words throughout the novel are capitalised to try and echo the way Jake would speak in real life. Did you find you placed more emphasis on these words when you were reading the text? You could try reading a page out loud. How did this change your reading experience?
- The main text of the novel is broken up with lists that Jake has written. These help him to not only work out the mystery of where his mum has gone but also how he feels about things that are happening in his life. Could you write a list of some of the things that have happened to you so far today? How does it make you feel? Is there anything on the list you could write your own story about?



## FRIENDSHIP:

*Given what had happened at football on Saturday, I had half thought he would have been too busy with his NEW FRIEND NORA to worry about me. And I still hadn't had a chance to find out what was going on there. P. 36*

How does Jake react when he finds out that Lukas is friends with Nora? What does this reveal about his feelings towards Lukas?

*Did he REALLY BELIEVE that looking for Mum could wait until TOMORROW? Why did NO ONE seem to REALISE how URGENT this was? I could feel the ANGER BOILING UP in me and it was THREATENING TO EXPLODE all over again. I took a DEEP BREATH and tried not to LOSE IT. P. 98-99*

Sometimes, when we are in a difficult situation our friendships might be tested. Can you find examples where Jake feels his friendship with Lukas is being tested and vice-versa? Can you think of any real life examples where you have faced a similar problem? How did you deal with it?

*I took a DEEP BREATH and waited for a WAVE OF JEALOUSY to ENGULF ME. However, this time it didn't come. After all, having TWO BEST FRIENDS had to be JUST AS GOOD if not BETTER than one. P. 173*

At the end of the novel Jake becomes friends with Nora and admits that making new friends is a positive thing. Try writing a description or creating a picture of your best friends.

## MENTAL HEALTH:

*The thing is, I REALLY DID WANT TO SEE MUM. But I still wasn't ready to admit that she was IN HOSPITAL and not on a FABULOUS ALL-INCLUSIVE HOLIDAY or OUT WITH HER FRIENDS or CHRISTMAS SHOPPING ON OXFORD STREET. P. 123*

Mental health is an important theme within the novel. Jake finds it difficult to come to terms with his mother's illness. What does this reveal about their relationship? Why do you think he reacts the way he does?

*'I saw it this morning,' Rose said flatly. 'I can't believe it's happened again. I shouldn't expect anything better, I suppose. We should both be used to it by now. She's always been like this.' P. 52*

How do the other characters within the novel react to Jake's mum's illness? Do Rose and Grandma handle the situation differently from how Jake does? In what way are their reactions shown within the story? Can you find any examples?

*But then SOMETHING ELSE HAPPENED, Neil really CROSSED THE LINE this time. 'Oi! Loony,' he shouted.*

*Suddenly, the room started SPINNING VIOLENTLY and the whole class DISAPPEARED. P. 86*

Why does Jake get so angry when Neil uses the term 'loony'? Do you think this is an offensive term to use and if so, why?

## FAMILIES:

At the end of the novel, Jake says: *My family wasn't PERFECT by any means, but they were mine and they were PERFECT TO ME. P. 186*

Families are all very different from each other and come in all shapes and sizes. Can you draw a family tree for your own family?

## RESILIENCE:

*...but I wanted to believe that she was PROTECTING MUM this year as she lay in the hospital and would help her to get better as QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE so she would be home in time for CHRISTMAS. P. 129*

Jake never gives up hope that his mum will get better and be home soon. Can you find any other examples of this within the text? Are there any other places within the novel where he shows resilience in a similar way? Have you ever faced a situation in your own life where you have had to show resilience?

## UNRELIABLE NARRATORS:

*Nothing. I can't remember. It wasn't really that important anyway. And how would you know what happened? You weren't even there. P. 107*

Jake is an example of someone who is an unreliable narrator. This means that sometimes we can't 100% trust his version of events. Can you think of any examples from other books you have read? What do you think makes Jake an unreliable narrator?