



Summer Book Club Activity Pack

Welcome to Summer Book Club. We are really pleased that you can join us reading Piu DasGupta's *Secrets of the Snakestone*, an exciting adventure in which Zélie and Jules face a deadly race to solve a family mystery and a vicious crime that stretches from the jungles of Calcutta to the sewers of Paris.

This is your activity pack to use alongside reading the book. It has questions and ideas for activities you can try.

Do as many as you can, or make up your own. This pack is designed to be used over four weeks, but you can use it at whatever speed works for you.

Enjoy your reading and have a great summer!



1. **Read** some of the book each week (the questions and activities are divided into four weeks)
2. Have a **look at the questions** for each week and think about them
3. Try some of the **activities** suggested
4. Come back to school ready to **share what you thought** about the book and the activities you did
5. Join in the **live online event** with Piu DasGupta in September
6. **Have fun!**

Week 1: Read chapters 1-7

Week 2: Read chapters 8-16

Week 3: Read chapters 17-27

Week 4: Read chapters 28-end





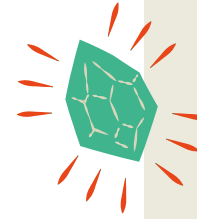
Week 1

Secrets of the Snakestone by Piu DasGupta

Read Chapters 1-7

Questions to think about

- 1 How has Zélie ended up in Paris on her own without her parents? What do you think has happened to her father? How does Zélie feel about the situation? What do you think she should do?
- 2 Why are the people at the Cirque Fantastique so welcoming to Zélie when other people are not? Why do the servants in Zélie's house think she is a witch - why are they scared of her?
- 3 How does Zélie persuade Jules to help her? Do you think it is fair that she uses the fact that he worries about his father to get him to agree? Do you think Jules will regret agreeing to help? Why?
- 4 Is there any science behind the magic of the crystal ball? Would you get your fortune read? Would you believe anything from a crystal ball reading? Why or why not? Does Zélie believe her reading?



Activities

- 1 How did Zélie get from Calcutta to Paris? Look up how long her journey would have taken in the 1890s. What do you think she did while on her journey - where might she have stopped and what might she have seen? Draw a map of the route she could have taken and include any things she might have seen.
- 2 On page 11 there is a riddle that Zélie's father has written. Can you write a similar riddle about an everyday thing? Try it out on a friend or member of your family and see if they can guess what it is.
- 3 Madame Malaise's hat sounds extraordinary - re-read the description on page 25. Try drawing or creating a similarly outrageous hat of your own. What is it celebrating or trying to show? How is it built? How do you make sure that it is not too heavy or hard to keep on your head? When would you wear it?



About the Author

Piu DasGupta was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata) India, and grew up in India and the UK. She worked as a lawyer before following a long-nurtured dream to be a writer. She writes poetry and dark, twisty tales which she hopes will be enjoyed by all ages. *Secrets of the Snakestone* was her first children's book and now has a sequel, *The Golden Monkey Mystery*.

- Look Piu DasGupta up online and see if you can find any more information about how she became an author and where she gets her ideas from.
- Did you know that 2026 is the **National Year of Reading**? They have great recommendations linked to what you are into <https://goallin.org.uk>
- Do you enjoy writing? If so, check out the BBC's 500 word competition. It will open again in September 2026. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/500-words>



BOOK CLUBS
IN SCHOOLS





Week 1 - Draw or make the mysterious locket

Draw or make a model of the mysterious locket that Jules has found. You can use recycled materials including card and tinfoil.

Use the descriptions in the book and any other information you can find about it. How do you think it got there? Do you think the stories about it are true?

- What is it made out of?
- What colour is it?
- How big is it?
- What was inside the locket?
- Why do you think it feels so hot to touch?





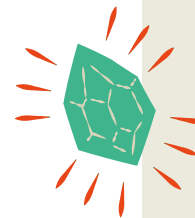
Week 2

Secrets of the Snakestone by Piu DasGupta

Read Chapters 8-16

Questions to think about

- 1 What are the Catacombs? Have you ever wondered about what goes on underground in big cities? Do you think there are any tunnels or large sewers big enough to hide or walk in running underneath where you live?
- 2 What is the Brotherhood of Blood? Why does it exist and what does it do? How do you become a member and why is it so secretive? Do you think it is connected to Zélie and her father's disappearance?
- 3 What do think of Jules' home? Why is Zélie so surprised by the decoration of the crate and the books? What does it tell you about the living conditions in Paris at the time?
- 4 Who do you think discovered Zélie and Jules in the Brotherhood of Blood's headquarters? What had they been searching for in the drawers of the desk?



Get out and about

Activities

- 1 How is Zélie going to look after the baby sloth? What kind of conditions does it need to live in? What does it eat? How might its hiding place be discovered? Make a plan for keeping the sloth safe, including a list of foods its needs, a timetable for making sure it is fed regularly and precautions Zélie should take to prevent it being discovered.

- 2 Why does Zélie enjoy wearing her 'sewer boy' disguise so much and why is it so effective? What other outfits could she have worn and gone unnoticed? Draw a picture of what you she looks like in her maid's uniform and what she looks like in disguise.

- 3 Most of the circus tricks in the book are too dangerous to try at home, but you could have a go at learning to juggle. There is a good CBBC video to help get you started:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/watch/how-to-be-epic-how-to-juggle>



Zélie finds a whole new way to get around the city of Paris through the underground tunnels and sewer system. We don't recommend you start exploring underground, but there are adventures on your doorstep too, if you look for them. Where could you go to on foot or on your bike, scooter or skateboard? Are there any parks or open spaces near where you live, or good places to go for a walk or a picnic? See if you can encourage your friends or family to come out with you too.

- Why not try geocaching - a free worldwide outdoor treasure hunting game. Find out more here:
<https://www.geocaching.com/play>
- You can also use the free Adventure Lab® app to enjoy this activity virtually through interactive guided tours and experiences by following a series of virtual waypoints, and routes you can follow in your local community. Remember to stay safe while you're playing and don't play with people you don't know in real life.



BOOK CLUBS
IN SCHOOLS





Week 2 - Map a hidden underground tunnel system

Imagine there is an underground tunnel system in your town or neighbourhood. Draw a map showing where it runs and where you can enter it. When drawing your map, think about:

- What is its history, why was it built?
- How would you get into it?
- Who uses it?
- Where does it go to? Is it just from one place to another or does it link a number of buildings?
- What has it been used for?
- What would happen if more people knew it was there?





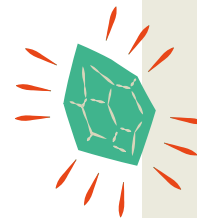
Week 3

Secrets of the Snakestone by Piu DasGupta

Read Chapters 17-27

Questions to think about

- 1 How does the discovery that Zélie's mother was the one who discovered the cure for Blisterpox and not Docteur Malaise change things? Who else do you think knows the truth?
- 2 Do you believe that the Snakestone will cure whatever illness Brother Ombre has? Why do you think he believes that it will and do you think he will keep his part of the deal that he makes with Zélie?
- 3 Is Zélie right to trust Blanche after all that has happened? Would you have changed your mind about her?
- 4 Do you think that the stone they have found is fake? What makes you think that? And if it is fake, where is the real Snakestone and why has Zélie's father got it wrong?



Activities

- 1 How do you think the world will react when they find out that Docteur Malaise did not discover the award winning cure for Blisterpox? Write a news article (either for a newspaper or to be read out on the news) that reports on this development.
- 2 Zélie's father includes clues in his letter to her - imagine you are Zélie and you can't meet up with Jules. Instead you need to write him a letter that lets him know where he needs to go to find the Snakestone. What clues could Zélie give Jules that he would understand and that would make sure he could find the stone?
- 3 When Zélie and Jules go back to the circus there are new posters up advertising the acts. Design and draw your own poster for Le Cirque Fantastique October Extravaganza. Decide which acts will draw the biggest crowds and don't forget to include the dates and times.



Libraries and Museums

Zélie has taught herself about kick-boxing from reading *The Mysteries of Paris*. Why not go out and visit your local library and see what you could find out about? Libraries are not only a great place to find books, but many also lend magazines and DVDs, run fun clubs such as Lego club and have computers you can use for free. Or maybe you could visit a local museum - museums have exhibits about all sorts of topics. If you're not sure what's in your area, your local library will be able to help give you information about them too.

- You can find your local library online here: <https://libraryon.org/libraries>
- Do some research online or at your local library and find out about museums that are near you. Many are free or have discounted tickets for local residents and you can visit some of them - like the British Museum - online. www.britishmuseum.org/
www.museums.co.uk
www.visitbritain.com



BOOK CLUBS
IN SCHOOLS





Week 3 - When in history would you like to time travel to?

If you could pick a time in history to go back to, when would it be and why? Think about:

- what major events could be happening.
- what day to day things exist or are yet to be invented.
- who you might be in that time zone.
- whether you would you change the course of history and what consequences that might have.

Once you have chosen a time to travel to:

- make a model of something from that time in history.
- draw or collage what people would be wearing.
- write a short story or create a comic strip featuring a trip to you chosen time zone.





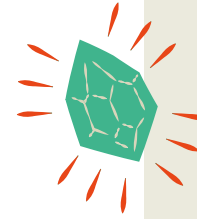
Week 4

Secrets of the Snakestone by Piu DasGupta

Read Chapters 28-end

Questions to think about

- 1 Why is Ivan the Incombustible so reluctant to give up the Snakestone? Do you think he is the first person to become so attached to it?
- 2 What do you think is going to happen to the Brotherhood of Blood now that Brother Ombre is dead? Why do people join secret societies? Are they always a bad thing?
- 3 Why does Jules change his mind about going with Zélie and her father to India? How do you think Jules' father feels about it? What would you have done?
- 4 Why is Zélie's father so sure that the Snakestone will reappear at some point? Do you think he is right to be so certain? What do you think happens to the stone once it is found?



Activities

- 1 Write a short newspaper article on a part of the adventure that you really enjoyed, including a snappy headline to grab your readers' attention or create a social media post, including an appropriate image.
- 2 Write your own review of the book. You could include:
 - a short summary of the story (no spoilers!)
 - is it exciting/scary/funny etc?
 - why you enjoyed it/didn't enjoy it
 - your favourite part or character
 - who you think would enjoy it
 - three words to sum it up
 - any similar books you know
- 3 At the end of the book, Zélie and Jules are on a boat headed to India. Thinking about what has already happened in this book, write a short outline of what you think will happen next to Zélie and Jules and any other characters you think should be in a sequel.



Finding your way

Jules knows Paris really well and helps Zélie find her way around above and below ground.

At secondary school you will start to travel more on your own. How well do you know how to get around? Do you know the quickest and safest routes? Do you know how to find and read bus or train timetables? What about bike paths? Do you know how long it takes to get somewhere? Plan your route to school next year. Even if you are expecting to get a lift to school, it's good to have a back-up plan ahead of time.

- What is the quickest way to get there?
- When will you need to leave home?
- Is there an alternative way to get there if your usual way is disrupted?
- If you are unsure about doing it, can you ask someone to practise with you?
- If you are riding your bike, how will you carry your bag and do you need a lock?
- Do you need a travel pass for the bus or train?



BOOK CLUBS
IN SCHOOLS





Week 4 - Research a trip to Paris

Zélie and Jules' adventure includes many interesting Paris landmarks. Do your own research about what there is to see and visit in Paris and come up with your own trip plan. Include details about:

- How you would get there and how long it will take.
- Which museums you would like to visit and what you would hope to see there.
- Which landmarks you want to see - how high can you go up the Eiffel Tower and can you visit the Catacombs?
- Whether there are any events or performances you would like to see - e.g. sports games, theatre, the circus, concert etc.
- What the best way is to travel around Paris.

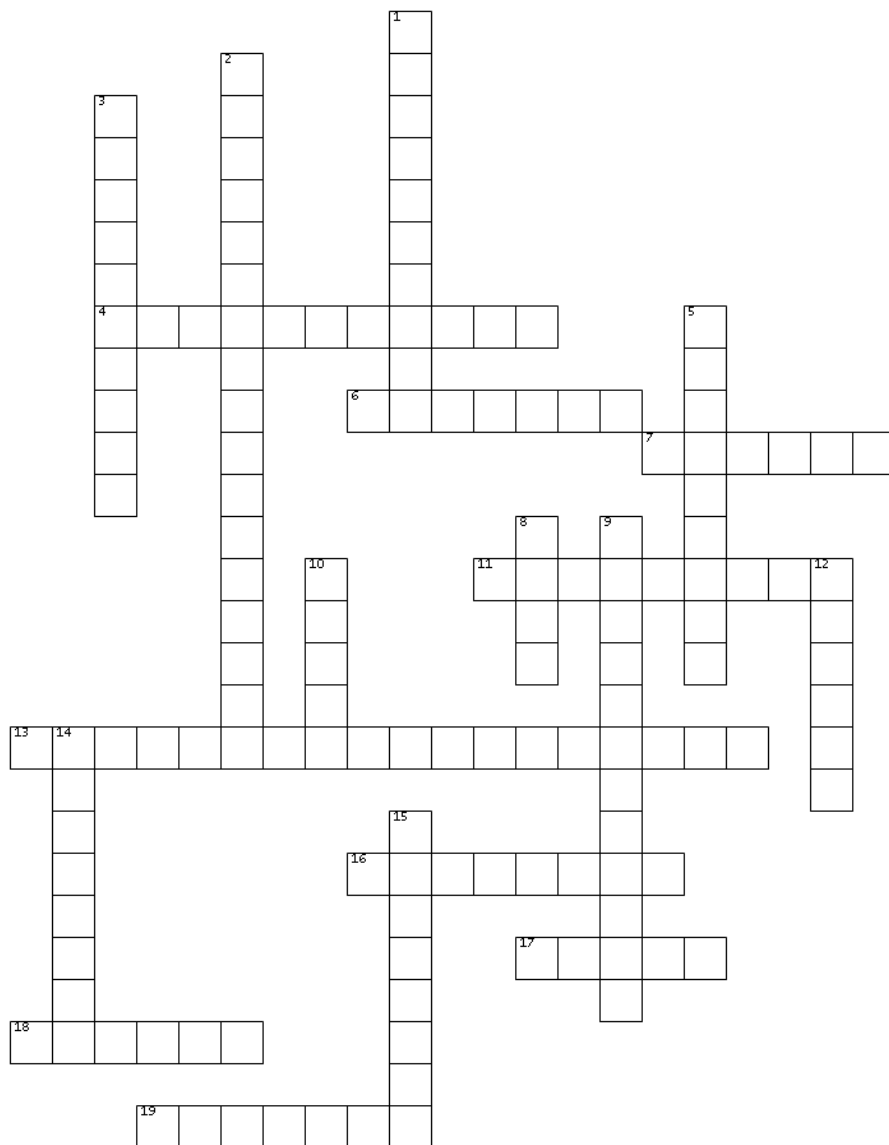


BOOK CLUBS
IN SCHOOLS



Crossword

See if you can complete the crossword below. All the answers are in the book.



ACROSS

4. Famous Paris landmark - 6, 5
6. What Z lie goes to get for Madame Malaise's face cream - 7
7. One of Madame Malaise's things that goes missing - 6
11. The name for the tunnels under Paris - 9
13. The name of the secret society that is searching for the Snakestone - 11, 2, 5
16. The city in India where Z lie was born - 8
17. The city where the book is set - 5
18. Where Jules works - 6
19. She is working to care for her sister - 7

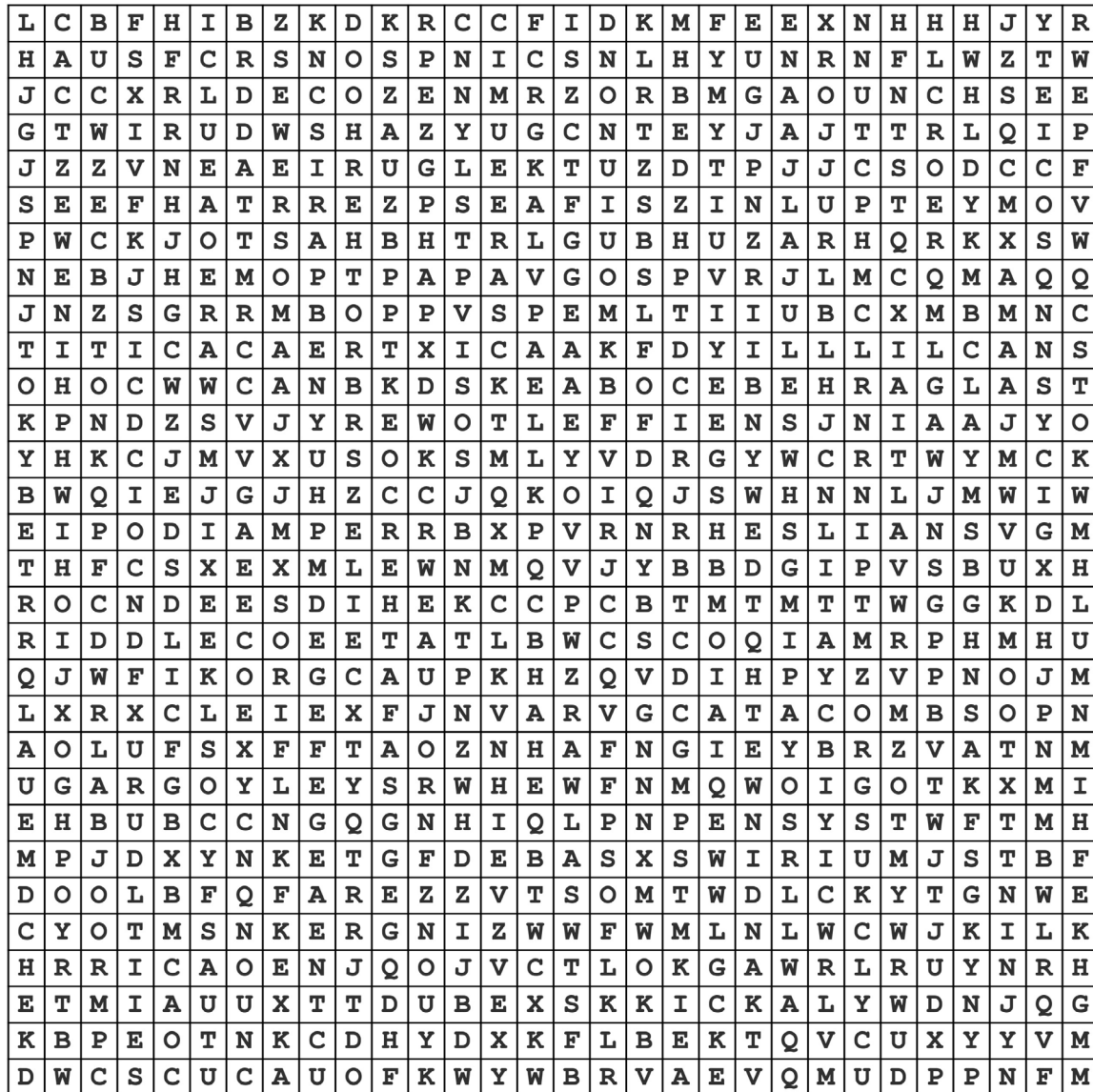
DOWN

1. The missing stone from the locket - 10
2. Where Z lie find old friends of her father - 6, 11
3. The illness Z lie's mother discovered the cure for - 10
5. What they travel on to return to India - 9
8. The job Z lie had in Paris - 4
9. The device that allowed them to view the slides - 5, 7
10. The animal Z lie rescues from the Brothers - 5
12. The pets that Jules keeps - 6
14. The pigeon Z lie feeds - 8
15. Where the Snakestone was originally hidden - 8



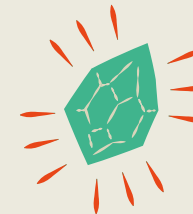
Word Search

See if you can find all the words in the giant word search below.



BLANCHE
 BLOOD
 BOTANICAL
 BROTHERHOOD
 CALCUTTA
 CATACOMBS
 CIRCUS
 CLUE
 CRATE
 EIFFEL TOWER
 EYES
 FATHER
 FLOOD
 GARGOYLE
 GOLDEN
 JULES

LOCKET
 MAID
 MAGIC LANTERN
 PARIS
 RAT
 RIDDLE
 SECRETS
 SEWERS
 SLOTH
 SNAILS
 SNAKESTONE
 SOCIETY
 STEAMSHIP
 TITICACA
 TUNNEL
 ZELIE



What to Read Next

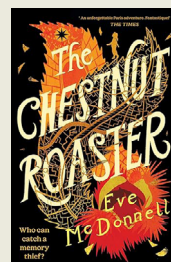
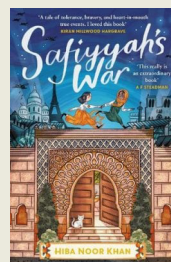
If you enjoyed **Secrets of the Snakestone**, look out for the sequel **The Golden Monkey Mystery**.

When Roma stumbles upon a rare golden monkey, she vows to return it to its hidden home in the Himalayas. But the path is riddled with peril: ruthless bandits, prowling beasts, and the sinister power of the Snakestone - a jewel that stalks her dreams.

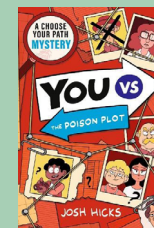
Only a mysterious map offers a chance of success - but with every step, pursuers of the Snakestone draw closer. Can Roma unlock the map's secret before the jungle swallows them whole?



Other books set in the catacombs under Paris



More adventures to enjoy



You vs the Poison Plot by Josh Hicks
It's the eve of the school talent show, but the drama teacher has suddenly collapsed. In this interactive adventure you get to choose what happens next!



The Boy to Beat the Gods by Ashley Thorpe
With his new powers, Kayode joins forces with a trickster god and a vengeful princess to save his sister and put an end to the mighty Orishas.



The Night I Borrowed Time by Iqbal Hussain
When Zubair's granny gives him a mysterious amulet, he discovers he has inherited a gift: the ability to time-travel...



Finn's Epic Fails by Phil Earle
Finn just wants to survive Year 7, but his life is destined to be a series of epic fails. Join him as he attempts to turn failure into victory in his very own book that is definitely not a diary.