



Penny Draws a Secret Adventure

SARA SHEPARD

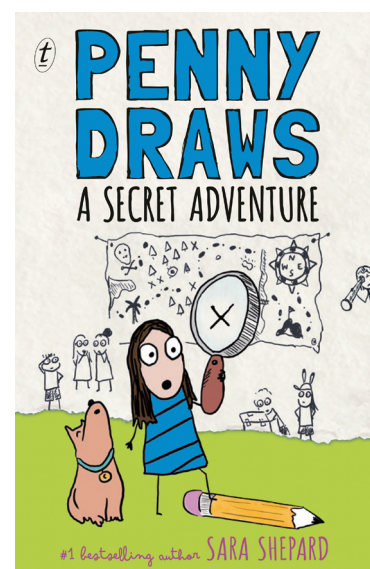
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Fiction

RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 8+

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CURRICULUM GUIDE

The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning, and connect it to audience, purpose and context. They aim to encompass a range of forms and include a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they include the integration of ICT and life skills.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Credit: Danielle Shields

Sara Shepard is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Pretty Little Liars* series, the *Lying Game* series, the *Perfectionists* series, *The Heiresses*, *The Elizas*, *Reputation* and her beloved *Penny Draws* series.

SYNOPSIS

The third in Sara Shepard's middle-grade *Penny Draws* series, *Penny Draws a Secret Adventure* reunites readers with the highly anxious, very endearing, Penny Lowry.

After an anxious and slightly lonely beginning to middle school in *Penny Draws a Best Friend*, Penny found a group of friends who made her feel good about herself. Then in *Penny Draws a School Play*, a school bully and a role in the school play brought all Penny's anxieties back and threatened her new friendships. Luckily, things worked out in the end, just in time for Penny to discover that her family is about to move house and her mum's pregnant... with twins!

We return to Penny the morning her mum brings the twins home to their new house from hospital. The twins are LOUD, and cry every time Penny walks into the room. Do they hate her? When Penny accompanies her father into the shed to look for the baby rocker that will (hopefully) bring them all a bit of peace, she discovers a mysterious box. And when she and her friends find the key that unlocks it they find a clue inside. The clue is a map, directing them on a scavenger hunt of the local area. But someone else is also following the clues, and it looks like they're going to discover the treasure first. Could it be Riley, Penny's nemesis? Or is someone else on their trail?

Can Penny find the treasure and convince the babies to like her and hold back her anxiety? Time will tell. *Penny Draws a Secret Adventure* is another light-hearted, endearing story about friendship, worrying, and letting people surprise you.



BEFORE READING

1. Have you ever been worried about something? Share your experiences of anxiety. How can it shape the way people respond to their friends and things that happen to them?
2. Look at the illustration on the cover and others in the book. Make a list of words that might describe Penny.

WHILE READING

1. How does Penny feel about her new siblings when they first arrive home? How do her feelings change?
2. 'Locked boxes usually meant secrets.' (p. 13) What else could a locked box mean?
3. What scheduling problems do Penny and her friends run into when they try to make a time to hang out?
4. Why did Penny's dad break the swing?
5. What is the scary thing that Chloe tells Penny about the old house? Is it true?
6. What does Penny see when she looks out into the witches yard?
7. Who else is trying to find the treasure? How does Penny discover their identity?
8. What are some of the challenges of having new family members?
9. Why doesn't Penny like Riley? What do they have in common?
10. Penny and her mum never do have a conversation about all the books Penny has ordered to make the twins like her. What do you think her mum would have said?
11. What is the real treasure that Penny discovers?

AFTER READING

CHARACTER

1. Penny says that she's fine with Maria and Chloe hanging out without her, but she's obviously not. What tells you how she really feels? Why do you think she struggles to admit this to herself?
2. Who are some of the 'different Pennys' that Penny wishes she could be. Have you ever wished that you could be a different version of yourself? What would you change?

3. Why does Rocco struggle with the school project? What are some of ways he wants to capture himself as cereal?

STYLE AND STRUCTURE

Writing a mystery

Although *Penny Draws a Secret Adventure* doesn't end up being a shocking mystery, Sara Shepard uses all the elements of a mystery story to make the story interesting and keep readers guessing.

1. Some elements of a mystery story are clues, red herrings and suspects. Find an example of each of these in the book. What other elements can you think of?
2. How does Penny solve the mystery? What else does she discover along the way?
3. Use these elements as a template to create your own mystery. It might be a puzzle for Penny to solve, or it might be about an entirely new character. You decide!

THEMES

Community

1. Penny learns a lot about her local community, both because of the treasure hunt and because of her school project. What do you think surprises her the most about 'the witch'? Why?
2. Draw a circle of the people in Penny's community, placing them near or far depending on how close she is to them. Include her friends and family. Who else is in her community? Draw a circle to show who's in your community. Are communities fixed, or do they change over time? How does Penny's community change?
3. Penny's community isn't just people, it's a place and the way that people connect to it. Copy the map of Penny's community used in the treasure hunt and make a note to show the places where important moments take (or have taken) place, not just for Penny, but for all the characters in the book. How do their lives overlap? How does this overlap help to create and strengthen community?

Change

1. Penny has to move house and deal with two screaming babies at home. Those are some very big changes! Sometimes changes happen to you (like the babies) and sometimes they happen inside you or because of you. What are



- some of the other changes that happen during the book? How would you classify them?
2. Penny calls Mrs Hines (the feelings teacher) in a big panic after she shouts at her friends. But the next morning when she gets to school, she decides that she can handle it herself. What has changed? What does this tell you about Penny?
 3. Change can make us feel worried (like Penny), or lonely (like Greta). What are some other ways that people respond to change?
 4. Penny wonders if the family who left are missing the keys she's found. Imagine that you've found a mysterious bunch of keys. Draw one, and write the story of where it came from and what it unlocks.

The power of stories

1. Why does Penny feel weird about Chloe and Maria hanging out without her? Is this fair? How can people navigate jealousy in a friendship. What is some of the (surprisingly good) advice that Riley gives Penny about this?
2. What do you think Chloe and Maria would tell Penny if she told them about her jealousy?
3. What are some of the things Penny thinks her friends think of her? What do they actually think?

RESPONDING

1. Make a list of the weirdest worries you've ever had. Which of these worries would make a good story for Penny? Use the Pixar Story Spine (below) to map out what might happen?

Once upon a time there was _____.
 Every day, _____.
 One day _____.
 Because of that, _____.
 Because of that, _____.
 Until finally _____.

2. In the novel, Penny and her classmates have to do a school assignment in which they imagine themselves as cereal boxes. Do this as a classroom project. What kind of cereal box would you be? How would you describe or 'sell' yourself to the rest of the class? Reflect on some of the challenges that Penny encounters during this project as you create it.
3. Draw a map of your local area, and create a scavenger hunt. Write clues to lead people from one place to the next, and a small treasure for them to find. Use the witch as inspiration and fill your treasure chest with your own memories.