

A TWINKL ORIGINAL



**OUR★TEACHERS★ARE
SUPERHEROES**







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Chapter 1

Superpowers

“If you could have a superpower, what would it be?”

Dressed up in a brightly-coloured costume with a blue cape, Miss Higgins was posing the question to both her class and Mr Jay’s as both groups of children crowded into one hot classroom together at the end of another lesson working on their ‘superheroes’ topic. It was a topic that had sparked great enthusiasm so far, from children and teachers alike. Mr Jay was sporting a navy cape over a teal all-in-one suit with a gadget belt, a mask and long yellow boots.

“I would definitely choose to fly!” suggested someone.

“I want to freeze time!” said another.

“I’d be invisible so I could spy on people or scare them!” laughed Benji.

“Interesting ideas,” Mr Jay smiled. “Although I’m not sure that’s such a kind choice, Benji. Perhaps you might think of what good your powers could be used for instead of spying and scaring people.”

Benji still thought being invisible would be a rather

funny power to have. Carefully and quietly, he reached his hand around the back of Freya and tapped her left shoulder. Instinctively, her head snapped to the left, and when she found no one there she looked back to her right to see Benji giggling.

“If I were invisible, I could do that all day and you’d have no idea who it was, even if I was standing right in front of you,” he whispered.

“You can be so annoying sometimes! I’d know it was you even if I couldn’t see you!” Freya retorted with a half-smile.

She was right. Benji had a mischievous streak that occasionally bordered on irritating, but the pair were good friends and always knew how to make each other laugh. They had been friends since they were toddlers, as they had always lived on the same street, often having adventures that were mainly concocted by Benji. Now, they hung around together at school even though they were in separate classes. Luckily, the two classes often paired up for topic lessons, and Benji liked to use this time to act daft with his friend.

After Benji’s class had returned to their own classroom and been sent out for lunch, he sidled back to Mr

Jay's room to wait for Freya. As the children finally came rushing noisily through the door, grabbing coats and swinging lunchboxes, Mr Jay's voice was almost drowned out as he called out,

"Slow down, you lot, no one needs to run, thank you!" Benji slid inside to hurry Freya along.

"Why are you always last?" he asked her with a grin.

Mr Jay answered him.

"Well, she was helping me to collect these topic books for a start. Thanks for your help, Freya. I appreciate it. Don't be late out for lunch now, though."

With no other children left inside the classroom, Benji waited even longer while Freya finished putting her own things away. Miss Higgins then strode in and asked why the pair were still not outside. The two teachers started to discuss how well the session had gone and what a success the superheroes topic had been. Benji kept a prying ear tuned in to their conversation as Freya finally readied herself to head out onto the playground.

"I've just had a message. I've got to dash. Can you cover

my lunchtime duty?” Mr Jay was asking Miss Higgins.

“Of course, no problem. To the rescue again, eh? Good luck! At least you’re already wearing the cape,” came her reply.

Intrigued, Benji peered over his shoulder as he followed Freya through the door. He just caught a glimpse of Mr Jay grabbing something shiny from his desk drawer and dropping it into a compartment of his gadget belt as he strode towards the exit. Where could he be going?

Benji’s inventive mind began to race. Mr Jay and Miss Higgins had been very keen on this ‘superheroes’ topic. And those costumes didn’t look like the type you just bought in a fancy-dress shop – they looked authentic. Now, Mr Jay was rushing off unexpectedly with something in his gadget belt to somewhere which required him to wear a cape.

An incredible idea began to form in Benji’s head.



Chapter 2

Suspicion

Despite the things they had in common, the two friends had very different appearances. Benji, with his dark, frizzy hair and skin the colour of caramel, was the shorter of the pair. Freya stood a few inches taller, with fiery red hair and freckles scattered across her nose and cheeks. Their families had been friends for years before Freya and Benji were born, and they had grown up around each other.

“Don’t be so ridiculous!” Freya scoffed dismissively when Benji told her about his theory while walking home that afternoon.

“Just think about it for a moment,” he beseeched her. “Wouldn’t it be amazing? Our teachers could actually be superheroes! Like some secret crime-fighting duo or something! One of them is always dashing off here or there at lunchtimes or whenever they’re not teaching us.”

“Superheroes are just for comic books,” replied Freya.

“No, they’re not!” insisted Benji. “They just don’t like to be known by their secret identities. I even saw something on the news the other day. Some guy had run out of a shop after stealing a bunch of stuff from the shelves. The shop owner had phoned the police but thought the guy had already got away. Then the news reporter said police found the thief around the corner, tied up with all the stuff he had stolen right there next to him. There was a note stuck on his chest saying: ‘Stealing isn’t cool. Don’t be a dinkus.’ It wasn’t the police who had caught him, and the thief was so confused that he said he couldn’t even remember what happened.”

“‘Don’t be a dinkus’? That’s pretty funny. But it’s hardly likely to be Mr Jay or Miss Higgins, is it?” asked Freya.

“I’m telling you, I have a weird feeling about this,” said Benji.

The next day, Freya hardly gave another thought to their conversation. Benji, on the other hand, was constantly on the lookout for clues. He kept a close watch on his teachers all morning, and he was rewarded at lunchtime: Miss Higgins received a phone call and Mr Jay gave her a friendly nod as she left.

“Your turn today!” Mr Jay said with a smile.

Both classes were combined again for the start of the afternoon while Mr Jay read the beginning of a story. The classes sat patiently, perched on tables and packed onto the carpet, and listened while they digested their lunch. After about 20 minutes, Miss Higgins returned quietly and sat at the side until they reached a suitable place to pause.

“We’ll leave it there for now,” Mr Jay decided, closing his copy of the book as they reached a place where two sections of the chapter were separated from each other by three asterisks. “Here’s a quick trivia question: does anyone know what these three asterisks are called,

where we just stopped reading?”

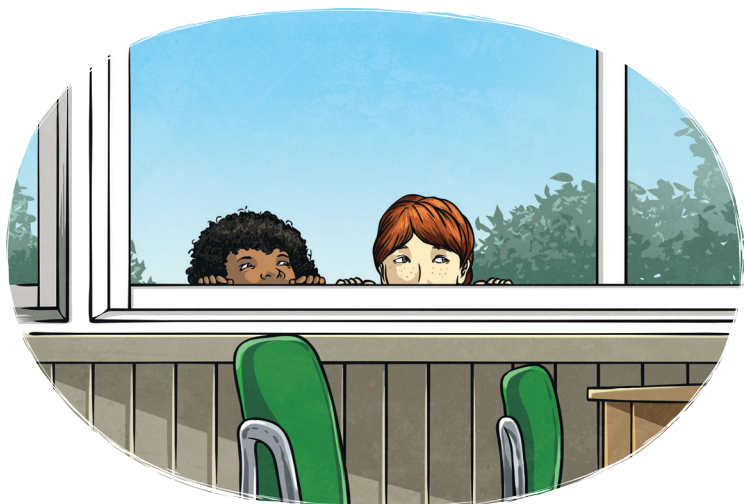
There was a short silence, and it became clear that this question was beyond the classes' knowledge. Eventually, Miss Higgins raised her hand with a grin.

“Well, I know you already know!” Mr Jay laughed. “Go on then, Miss Higgins.”

“It's a dinkus!” replied the other teacher.

“Indeed it is,” said Mr Jay. “A funny old name, rarely used nowadays, but I like it!”

Amidst the mass of children, two jaws dropped open in astonishment.



Chapter 3

Investigating

“I’m telling you, there’s only one way we can prove they’re hiding secret superhero identities. We need to spy on them.”

“You’re not really invisible like you wanted to be, you know, Benji! You’ll get found out and then what? You’ll probably get us both into trouble.”

Though Freya agreed that the ‘dinkus’ incident was peculiar, she wasn’t as keen to rush into an espionage mission as Benji was. However, it always seemed that no matter how much she put up a fight, she was

eventually persuaded to go along with her friend's hare-brained schemes. This time, she had to admit, part of her was beginning to wonder whether he was really onto something.

Luckily, the two children lived just a few doors away from each other, not far from school. After the bell rang for home time, the pair raced back to their respective houses and each changed out of their uniform in record time. No more than 15 minutes after they'd walked out of the gates, they were pedalling furiously back towards school.

After tiptoeing around the outside of the building and avoiding the watchful eye of the caretaker, Mr Ficksbilder, Benji leaned his bike against a bush and silently summoned Freya over to where he was crouching low on the ground below Mr Jay's classroom window. Hidden between the building and the bushes outside, the two rose slowly from their squat positions just enough to peer over the window ledge and into the classroom. Inside, Mr Jay was sitting at his desk, partly obscured by the huge pile of science books that he was marking.

Again, Benji motioned with his hand for Freya to follow him, before moving in a very strange fashion along the ground next to the wall. He wasn't quite crawling, as his knees weren't touching the floor; it was more of a waddle, with his legs bent at the knee and his backside hovering a few centimetres from the floor. Freya couldn't help it; she thought he looked like a human frog! A laugh more like a snort burst out of her quicker than she could raise her hand to cover her mouth.

"Sssshhh!" Benji spun around with a frown.

Shoulders heaving up and down, biting down hard on her fist, Freya composed herself and followed her friend in comical stealth formation, pressed close to the wall but never rising high enough to be spotted through the low windows.

After what seemed like an hour, they reached the next classroom along: Miss Higgins' room. Once again, they raised their heads inch by inch and peered through the window, looking left and right. All was quiet and motionless. A ring of light around the edge of the door told them that a light in the classroom's store cupboard had been left on, but there was no sign of anyone. Freya imagined that the stacked chairs, empty pegs and piled

books of the classroom were breathing a silent sigh of relief as the dust settled after the long day.

Freya was just about to turn and tell Benji that she was going home when the light in the store cupboard flicked off, and the two watchers flinched like startled rabbits. As the door began to open, the children's eyes widened and they ducked slightly, torn between the desire to see and the fear of being seen.

The figure that emerged from the cupboard was a vision in teal, yellow and navy blue. Miss Higgins' plain dress and sensible shoes of the day were no longer visible: a long blue cape billowed around her whole body and her tall sunflower-yellow boots rapped the floor smartly. Freya and Benji looked at each other, their eyes like saucers. They had seen Miss Higgins' superhero costume before – but why would she be wearing it now? As they turned back to the window, the teacher tapped something into her phone, glanced at her watch and then in the blink of an eye, hurtled off out of sight with three quick, long paces. Whoosh! She was gone.



Chapter 4

Evidence

The friends agreed that Miss Higgins had moved extremely fast on her way out of the classroom, but they couldn't quite agree whether the speed at which she had exited was, in fact, beyond normal human capabilities.

"You're imagining it!" argued Freya. "She just ran quickly while we weren't looking."

"No way," countered Benji. "She was like a flash – it was incredible!"

Behind the wall near the school gates, Freya and Benji hung around for over an hour before they finally spotted the first teachers beginning to leave school. Mr Wilstead walked across the car park in his usual brown tweed jacket, carrying a battered briefcase. Already chatting with a hands-free earpiece hooked around his ear, he climbed into his car and drove off without noticing the two pairs of eyes watching him. Mrs Yates trudged past a few minutes later, hunched over and hauling two shopping bags full to the brim with exercise books. She fumbled with her keys for a while, before heaving the bags into the boot and heading out through the gates.

Three more teachers emerged from the main doors and left while the spying children stayed out of sight. Finally, they sighted their quarry: Mr Jay and Miss Higgins both appeared at the main doors. She was no longer wearing her cape; he was carrying a sporty rucksack over his shoulder. Each had a stack of test papers under their arm; the children recognised the reading paper the classes had been given that morning. Freya cocked her head to one side to listen from a distance.

At first, the conversation was a bit of a mumble and it was hard to make anything out. Miss Higgins seemed

to take a moment to survey the car park before turning to Mr Jay. The final fragment of speech came as clear as a whistle:

“I’m on a mission tonight.”

“Me too. Good luck! See you in the morning – let me know how you get on.”

With that, the two teachers headed off to their separate cars and drove away, leaving Freya and Benji staring at one another.

Benji held his tongue for what felt like an age, until he was sure they were far enough away from school. Then he exploded.

“I told you!” he launched into an animated appeal. “A mission! They’re both superheroes; they’re fighting crime or something. There’s definitely something going on!”



Chapter 5

Not Giving Up

The next morning, the friends walked the couple of streets to school together. All the way, they speculated over what they had seen, shared theories and debated possible clues. Freya described another item that she had seen on the news. An old lady had been trapped in a burning building and the firefighters had not been able to reach her. They said it was a miracle that she had escaped and they couldn't understand how she had managed it. Benji said that he had heard a noise and looked out of his bedroom window when it was dark, only to see something whizz past overhead – it had looked smaller and closer than a plane, but bigger

than a bird.

As they spoke, their movements became more animated and their voices rose together until they were even beginning to talk over one another – but they became deflated when Freya reminded Benji that they still had no real proof that these events were connected to their teachers. Determined to gather more evidence and not willing to give up easily, the pair agreed to meet at breaktime in the corridor between their two classrooms.

“I have an idea,” exclaimed Benji, when the time came and the rest of their classes were rushing past them, opening snacks or grabbing coats. “I reckon there’s something about that cupboard that we saw Miss Higgins appearing from. Think about it – none of us are ever allowed inside and that’s where she was when she came out wearing her cape again.”

An hour and a half later, Freya was watching the clock from her seat near the back of Mr Jay’s classroom, trying to ignore the butterflies in her stomach. She chewed absent-mindedly on the end of her pencil and fiddled with a strand of hair as she watched the minutes until lunchtime disappear. Benji had persuaded her that they could hide in a corner of the classroom

between the cloakroom area and the painting shirts, with the intention of staking out the store cupboard. She jumped when the bell rang for lunchtime, and after filing out with the rest of her class, she pushed her way upstream against the barrage of children and into Miss Higgins' classroom to join her friend in his hiding place.

Miss Higgins had been busy collecting books from tables and straightening chairs before eventually settling back down to her desk, seemingly unaware that two pupils remained tucked away in the same room. From their vantage point, the pair could just about see the edge of her desk but also had a perfect view of the store cupboard.

It wasn't long before the stake-out began to feel rather dull. Miss Higgins had taken a sandwich from her bag, and had nibbled on occasional bites while she marked more books. At one point, she stood up and walked over to add some sheets to the display board, before returning to her previous task and finishing her sandwich. Everyone else had probably eaten their lunch too and they were no doubt now enjoying the freedom of the playground. Meanwhile, Freya and Benji were squashed together, listening to their own stomachs rumbling.

The teacher's phone suddenly began to vibrate on the desk, startling Freya and Benji. She picked it up, tapped the screen and put it to her ear.

"Hmmm... uh-huh," she said briskly. She stood up and pushed back her chair, and walked straight towards the cupboard. Freya ducked down behind Benji, who had pulled a scruffy art shirt halfway across his face, as if it would keep him hidden should Miss Higgins turn and face in their direction.

Still listening to her phone, the teacher had one hand on the handle of the cupboard door but paused. "Gotcha. No problem – leave it to me," she said firmly before pocketing the phone and opening the store cupboard. She had been inside for only a few seconds when there was a knock at the classroom door, and in shuffled William, another boy from Benji's class. Miss Higgins popped her head back out of the cupboard.

"Ah, er... Will – of course. I almost forgot you were coming back. I'm glad you did, but..." she trailed off as her eyes wandered across the room and landed on the abnormally busy cloakroom area. "Oh – what are you two doing down there?"

With no plausible answer springing to mind, Benji

stood up, holding a silver and pink cap that clearly didn't belong to him, claiming to have found just what he was looking for. Miss Higgins laughed a little and then spoke.

“William here has come back for a little extra help with the maths work from this morning. Unfortunately, I have something important that I need to do right away. I'm sure these two wouldn't mind helping, William. You're both responsible,” she added, “and I won't be long.”

Knowing that they were rumbled and their chance had gone, both nodded silently in agreement and all three pupils sat down at a table as Miss Higgins disappeared out of the classroom door once again.



Chapter 6

Another Try

After helping William to simplify his fractions, Freya and Benji had eaten their sandwiches in the dining hall in about ten minutes flat and then had virtually no time at all in the playground. Miss Higgins had returned to the classroom a little while after she had left, looking a bit flustered but very grateful to the pair of them for staying in to help their classmate. William had also been extremely grateful, after Freya had explained the fractions work that he was struggling with, and said that he had finally got the hang of it better than ever.

“We might have missed out on following Miss Higgins or seeing any evidence of what she was up to, but I did actually enjoy helping Will – so at least something good came out of it,” Benji admitted. “I wonder where she went in such a hurry, though? I tell you what, I’m not giving up on this yet. Maybe we’ll have more luck with Mr Jay tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?” Freya gasped. “Oh no, I’m not going through all that ‘staking-out’ and spying again! Helping Will was great but being wedged in between those coat pegs was not my idea of fun.”

“But just imagine if we could catch one of them changing into their costume for a secret mission or flying off out of the window to rescue someone in danger!” Benji was flapping his hands around and bouncing on the spot as the whistle blew and everyone began to file back inside for the afternoon’s lessons. “I’ll see you later,” he called as the pair joined their own classes.

Freya gave a dismissive wave of her hand, barely glancing back over her shoulder as she headed into her class.

“Hi, Freya,” said Mr Jay with a smile, catching her by

surprise as he walked into the room with her. “Miss Higgins told me you were a great help at lunchtime. You and Benji working with William to help him with his maths – that’s a really cool thing to do. Well done!” With that, he gave her a friendly pat on the back, and as he did she caught sight of a really fancy gadget on his wrist. It was like a watch but more complicated – and it didn’t even have the time on it! Just as his wrist passed by the back of her head, the gadget beeped and a voice said, “Target achieved. Mission accomplished.”



Chapter 7

A Changing Place

The next day, Benji told Freya about his new plan, expecting her to protest and need some persuading. Instead, she hardly stopped talking all the way to school, nodding vigorously and gesturing wildly all the time. The reason for her eagerness became clear when she told him about Mr Jay's fake watch and the message he had received on it. Naturally, this excited Benji too. They agreed to put the next plan into action that lunchtime. Rather than focus on Miss Higgins and risk being caught in the classroom again, they would turn their attention to Mr Jay.

Mr Jay had told his class that he would not be around to teach them that afternoon, which was not totally out of the ordinary, but aroused their suspicion. Secondly, Benji argued that Mr Jay had no storage cupboard in his classroom, unlike Miss Higgins, so he probably wouldn't change there. The only obvious place for him to slip from his normal teacher clothes into the secret superhero outfit was the toilet for the male teachers, which was just around the corner from the staffroom. If the two could loiter somewhere near there in the corridor, they could possibly catch him in the act.

It wasn't easy, though. Not only were they not allowed unsupervised down the little part of the corridor between the staff toilets and the P.E. equipment, but they weren't supposed to be in the corridor at all without good reason at lunchtime. As they leant against the wall and tried to look invisible, Freya's heart began to pound and her face felt very hot.

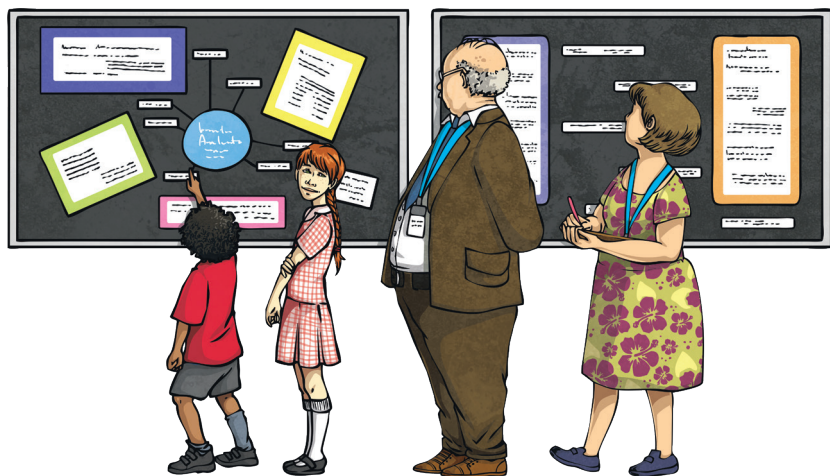
First, the year 6 teacher, Mr Wilstead, walked by in his usual brown jacket and asked them what they were doing. Freya's face became a furnace and she responded first, blurting out before she could stop herself that they were the new register monitors and were just about to deliver the registers to each class.

“What did you say that for?” hissed Benji as they walked away. “Now we’ve actually got to deliver the registers.”

“Sorry, it was just the first thing that came to mind,” said Freya as they collected the registers under the watchful eye of Mr Wilstead, and dashed around in double-quick time as soon as he had disappeared.

Returning to the tall plant which stood opposite the staffroom, they stood with their backs to the corridor, pretending to look at the display shelves, hoping that no other teachers would question why they were there. Meanwhile, each time the staffroom door opened, they snatched a quick glance inside to see whether Mr Jay was still sitting down.

The next person to visit the staffroom was the school secretary, Miss Schofield. She was only inside for a matter of seconds. When she came back out, she was followed closely by Mr Jay, who glanced up and down the almost empty corridor. Benji coughed and nudged Freya but she had already seen him. Unfortunately, the teacher had already seen them, too.



Chapter 8

A Super School

“Freya and Benji,” Mr Jay announced as he strode over to them. Freya’s heart was in her mouth and Benji stood as still as a statue. Caught wandering the corridors twice in one lunchtime! Freya closed her eyes and held her breath, waiting for the inevitable.

“A job for you two,” Mr Jay continued, just as Freya was deciding what she wanted on her headstone. “I’m sure you’re both up to the challenge.”

Freya opened her eyes and listened; Mr Jay didn’t sound angry or even disappointed to find the pair outside

the staffroom. He continued to explain: apparently, a couple of important visitors had just arrived in school and the headteacher had asked for some sensible pupils to show them around. Miss Schofield had been to the staffroom to see whether anyone had been chosen, and Freya and Benji were the first to be spotted for the role.

“I really can’t,” pleaded Benji. “I wouldn’t know what to say. I get all nervous with people I don’t know.”

Mr Jay had already made his decision. Calmly, he reassured them that they would be fine ambassadors for the school and that he was sure they’d do a great job. Ushering them towards the reception, he said that he had to dash and was leaving them in Miss Schofield’s capable hands.

It turned out that the visitors – a man and a woman from the local council – were a very friendly pair. Benji had indeed been a little nervous at first, letting Freya do all the talking, until about halfway round when his confidence grew. Enthusiastically, he began pointing out the artwork on the walls, explaining who had created it and what it was about. Just around that time, something strange occurred.

Walking back towards reception with the visitors, they

spotted Mr Jay disappearing into the staff toilet. Not too strange in itself, but as the door was closing behind him, Freya and Benji both caught sight of a flurry of yellow and blue in the narrowing gap before the door clicked shut. Was this the moment they had been trying to catch? Was Mr Jay changing in a whirlwind motion into his superhero costume? Mouths agape, they collected their thoughts as the council visitors paused in slight confusion.

“Shall we go down here next?” One of the visitors pointed in the opposite direction to where Benji really wanted to focus his attention. “I’d love to see the rest of your classrooms.”

Benji racked his brain for any reason that he could come up with to stay exactly where they were and see who – or what – would come out of that bathroom. Unfortunately, there was nothing in the area which would be of any interest to two important visitors.

“Er, yes, of course,” Freya stepped in. “There’s no point standing here showing you the toilets and the P.E. equipment, is there?” She forced a little laugh and shot Benji a glance.

By the time they were back at reception, Freya had

got the tour back on track and Benji had regained his confidence and tour-guide skills, but there was no sign of Mr Jay.

“Well, what a super school you have here!” the lady visitor said as she thanked the children once again before being guided away by Miss Schofield towards the headteacher’s office. Freya and Benji looked at each other.

“*Super!*” they both burst out at the same time and giggled.

That afternoon, Benji reflected on another seemingly missed opportunity in their search for evidence as he daydreamed his way through his fractions work. He had enjoyed speaking to the visitors; maybe he was not as nervous as he had thought with people he didn’t know. Freya confirmed later that there had been no sign of Mr Jay for the rest of the afternoon. The supply teacher had been kind and friendly, but just wasn’t quite the same type of *super* as her usual teacher.

Chapter 9

Dilemma

Benji sat in Freya's garden with her, throwing a tennis ball up into the air and catching it again and again. Every now and then, he launched it at the wall above Freya's head, making her jump before it bounced back into his hands.

"Stop doing that, Benji!" she finally snapped at him.

"Sorry. I was just thinking," he apologised.

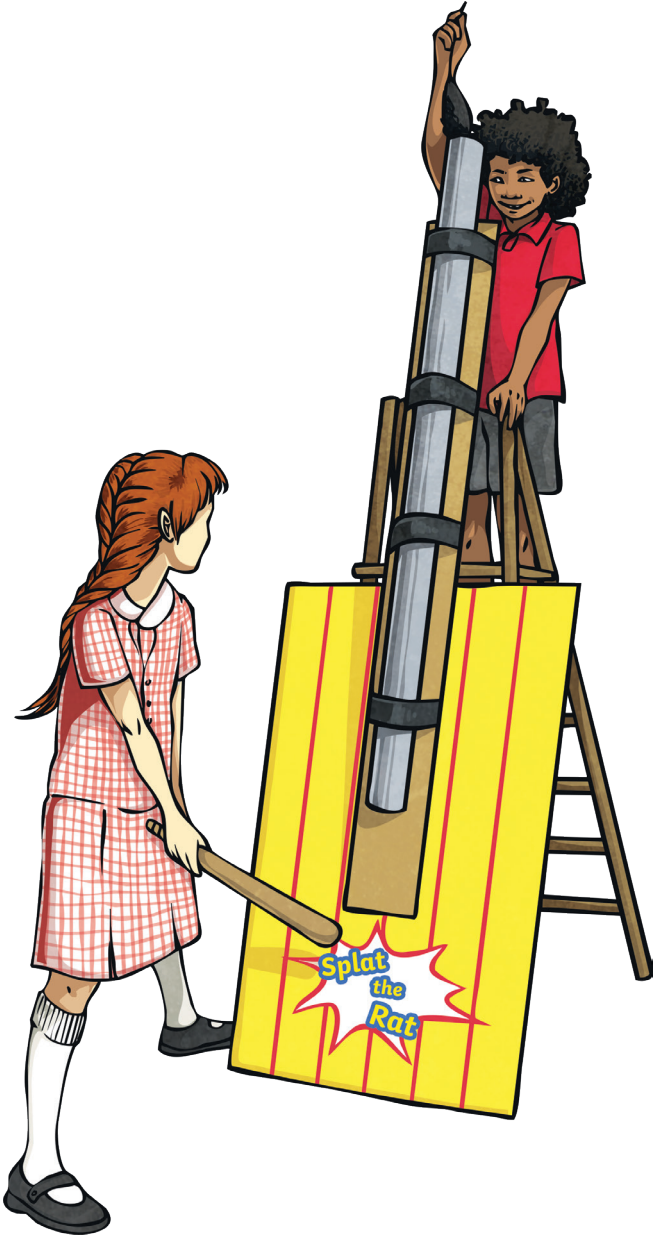
"Well, can you think without nearly taking my head off?"

"Alright, sorry! But listen, here's the thing I was thinking. Maybe we shouldn't be trying to expose the teachers' true identities after all. If we reveal their secret, do you think it could ruin what they do?"

"They're our teachers – we have a right to know!" Freya insisted, not really answering the question.

"Well, you've changed your tune. Aren't they just doing good? Maybe it's none of our business!" said Benji.

"Maybe it's everyone's business!" retorted Freya.



The discussion continued after tea that evening until Benji had to go home. They decided to give it one more try to catch the teachers and agreed that the perfect time would be the coming weekend. It was the school summer fair on Saturday, and they would be able to watch the teachers' every move from across the school field without getting into trouble. Each class had been designing fundraising ideas for a couple of weeks and Freya and Benji had volunteered to be in charge of a 'Splat the Rat' stall. Benji was looking forward to dropping a cuddly toy rat down a pipe for paying customers to try to hit with a rounders bat as it dropped out of the bottom. He would also be keeping a close eye on Miss Higgins and Mr Jay.



Chapter 10

The Fair

The day of the fair came soon enough without much to report at school. Although the fair didn't start until 12pm, the children had been there an hour earlier to get everything set up and ready before the paying customers arrived.

The school field had been completely transformed. Stalls, tents, vehicles and inflatables took up every corner of the space, and everywhere colourful flags flapped in the warm breeze. The same breeze carried the aroma of cooking burgers and hot coffee, and the sugar which hung in the air around the

pick 'n' mix stall wriggled up the noses of passers-by. A wonderfully busy hum filled the field, rising up from ice cream vans, cash boxes, food wrappers and busy conversations, not to mention the music blaring from the hall speakers, which had been dragged outside to provide entertainment. One of the parent volunteers was fiddling with a microphone on a long wire and every now and then it created a piercing whistle, forcing his hands to fly up to his ears.

The fair boasted a hook-a-duck, tombola, bouncy castle, inflatable slide and a 'throw the sponge at the teacher' stall, meaning that there was a plethora of games to choose from. Amidst all of these, under a canopy near the bouncy castle, was Benji and Freya's 'Splat the Rat'.

While setting out their table and arranging the 'rat board' with the pipe attached, the pair kept their eyes peeled for Miss Higgins and Mr Jay. Occasionally, they saw them nipping in and out of the 'teachers only' staging area at the side of the building. More often, they were carrying chairs, putting up bunting or pointing other children in the direction of where help was needed. Nothing caught Freya's attention or Benji's imagination – much to their disappointment.

After the gates opened at noon, people came flooding onto the school playground and field. All of the stalls were quickly bustling with customers, including lots of people attempting to splat the rat. It became a little trickier to keep track of the two teachers but Freya and Benji had agreed a plan in advance to make sure that they didn't let any more opportunities pass by.

With both of them running the stall, it was easiest for one person – Freya – to take the money from customers and work out any change, and the other person – Benji – to be in charge of dropping the rat into the top of the pipe, ready for the customer to try to splat it at the bottom. However, if Mr Jay or Miss Higgins did anything which looked even a little fishy, the children would say that they 'needed more change', in which case one of them would stay at the stall and the other would use the excuse to follow or spy as necessary.

Distracted by their work and their endless queue of customers, they were beginning to think that their plan would never be needed. Eventually, Benji spotted the two teachers near the edge of the staging area, speaking in a hurried kind of way that caught his eye. Mr Jay pointed into the distance; Miss Higgins looked carefully at her watch, then pointed at Mr Jay with some kind of instruction. If only Benji were

close enough to hear the conversation! He sensed that something was afoot, and he was ready to act.



Chapter 11

More Change

“Need more change!” he announced urgently, snatching up the pot of money as Freya served another customer.

“What? Ah! OK, I’ll manage here!” she said, reading the look in Benji’s wide eyes that told her all she needed to know. She glanced in the direction of the teachers, as Benji headed off quickly towards them.

Benji made a tremendous effort to look natural as he weaved his way between running infants, parents carrying ice creams and discarded paper cups in the direction of his teachers, but he needn’t have worried

about being conspicuous; as he approached the stage, Miss Higgins turned and began to walk away in the direction of the cake stall. Mr Jay appeared to be in more of a rush and began to jog purposefully away from all of the stalls. Benji looked from one of them to the other, knowing that without Freya, he could only follow one of them. His instincts told him that it was Mr Jay who should be his priority.

Intent on following at a safe distance, he hung back slightly, and as he did, he noticed Miss Higgins drop something on the grass as she walked towards the crowds of people between her and the cake stall. Benji hesitated, and screwed his eyes up to look closer. It looked like a small bag of money, not heavy coins but notes, and it seemed that she didn't realise she'd dropped it. She was supervising lots of stalls and must have collected it in for safekeeping.

Benji didn't want to lose track of Mr Jay, but he had to let his teacher know she had dropped the money, otherwise it might be stolen or picked up by someone who wasn't honest enough to hand it in. The right and honest thing to do was to retrieve it for her and catch her up. Again, he glanced from the back of one teacher to the back of the other, as they became gradually further apart. Miss Higgins was almost disappearing

into a crowd of people near the bouncy castle; Mr Jay was reaching the corner of the school building, about to leave Benji's line of sight.

"Aaargh!" he screeched in frustration, knowing what he had to do.

Setting off at a sprint, he quickly covered the ground to where the bag of money was lying and scooped it up. He picked up speed and hastily weaved his way into the crowd of people to catch Miss Higgins. Breathing heavily, he tapped her on the shoulder and handed her the money.

"You dropped this, Miss!" he panted.

"Oh, did I? Thank you so much, Benji. What a disaster it might have been to lose all this money that we've worked so hard to raise! That's really kind and honest of you. Well done!" she beamed at him, making his ears feel hot and his cheeks turn a little purple. "Shouldn't you be on your stall, though?"

"Erm, yes. Just needed some more change," he said. As Miss Higgins promised to be over in just a moment with some more change (which they really didn't need), Benji turned and looked towards the corner of

the building where he'd last seen Mr Jay. There was no sign of the teacher now.

With heavy feet and slumped shoulders, Benji trudged back to Freya and explained how the plan had unravelled. Soon afterwards, Miss Higgins arrived and poured a bag full of mixed coins into their tin, giving them a slightly confused look when she saw how much change was already in there. She didn't say anything, though, and happily headed off to see how the cake stall volunteers were doing further along the field.



Chapter 12

Heroes Arrive

“I can’t believe it,” Benji was still shaking his head and grumbling some time afterwards. The fair was still in full swing and plenty of customers were still trooping in through the gates. “That might have been our best chance. We’ve blown it again.”

Freya had listened to what had happened and had reassured Benji that he’d definitely done the right thing. It hadn’t made him feel any better. Now, she had become distracted by a small din rising from a not-so-small crowd of onlookers forming over to their left. It consisted of mostly children but the attraction was obscured by some adults; whatever it was appeared to be inciting lots of cheering and whooping.

As many more heads turned to see what was drawing all the attention, the children in the crowd began to sit down on the grass one by one, and it became easier to see what was at the centre of it - a pair of superheroes! Surrounded on all sides by younger children, the duo were in full costume: masks, capes, boots and spandex suits. They were exchanging high fives with adoring fans and throwing out treats.

Of course, both Benji and Freya recognised the costumes

as well as the people disguised underneath them.

Like the flicking of a switch, something triggered inside Benji and he pushed past Freya, marching in the direction of the small crowd.

“I know who you really are!” Benji confronted the brightly-coloured pair upon forcing his way into the crowd of children, almost all of who were younger than him.

At first, the pair at the centre of the attention tried to ignore him but he wasn't letting it drop. He couldn't hold it in any longer.

“I know your secret. I know your identities!” he shouted.

From underneath the mask, Mr Jay tried to calm him down quietly.

“Benji, stop!” he whispered from the corner of his mouth, trying to continue smiling at everyone else.

“See, I knew it was you. I know what you're both up to!” He wagged his finger towards them both.

“Of course it’s us,” replied his own teacher from underneath the other mask. “But don’t spoil it for the younger children.”

“Yes, but I know your real secret. It’s not just a costume, is it? You’re superheroes – both of you are. We both know it!” Benji pointed behind him at Freya, who didn’t really know what to add.

In an effort to calm the situation, Mr Jay waved to the crowd around him, telling everyone that he would see them soon. Quickly, he broke away, ushering Freya and Benji along with him.

“I think you’d better come with us,” the teacher said. He beckoned Freya and Benji to follow him, and after asking Mr Wilstead to kindly look after the Splat the Rat stall, the disguised Miss Higgins accompanied them into the school building.



Chapter 13

The Truth?

Freya wasn't sure whether to expect an explanation or a telling-off. She chewed her lip as she walked, feeling very small. Benji was equally quiet and reflective, and he kept his eyes on the floor as he followed Mr Jay into school.

Inside, the two teachers, dressed in the same costumes they had worn to school a few days earlier, sat opposite the children at a table in an empty classroom. The distant buzz of the summer fair was just about audible.

"We're dressed in our outfits because we thought

it would make a great attraction for the younger children at the fair," Mr Jay began. "Once everything was running smoothly, we nipped off to get changed to make a bit of an entrance."

"But, I saw when you left," spluttered Benji. "You were rushing away. Like the other times. We've been following you – we wanted to find out the truth!"

"It's true, we probably have some explaining to do," replied Mr Jay after a long pause.

"But, perhaps you two had better go first," added Miss Higgins. "Where did all this suspicion come from?"

Benji paused for a moment, then took a deep breath of his own and finally let all of the events spill out of his mouth. Freya occasionally chimed in with a little detail or extra information but mostly struggled to get a word in at all. Both teachers sat patiently and listened.

At the end, they looked at each other and smiled before beginning to explain. Miss Higgins had been working with another school down the road – this was no secret – and she had frequently been called away to help with situations there. Mr Jay had been called

out during lunchtime to help supervise the swimming class walking back from the local pool and, on another occasion, a problem with the gardening club when someone had been hurt.

“But we saw you wearing your cape and boots after school, Miss!” Benji reminded his teacher.

“I only threw this silly cape on because I was cold in the classroom when everyone had left. The boots are much warmer than my sandals too. Then I realised I was late for a staff meeting and had to dash quickly! You know, you really shouldn’t have been spying like that.”

“What about being ‘on a mission’, Sir, when you came out of school, or when we saw your quick outfit change in the toilets at lunchtime?” countered Freya.

“My, you have been busy investigating, haven’t you?” replied Mr Jay. “We both meant we were simply on a mission to get through the whole pile of reading papers that needed marking, nothing more. As for changing outfits, I’m not sure what you saw but I think I was only getting into my sports kit to teach P.E. with the year 1s and 2s.”

It seemed that the teachers had an explanation for every supposedly suspicious activity that the children thought they had seen. Even Mr Jay's gadget was just his sports watch that counted how many steps he walked in a day, until it announced that he had achieved his target of 10,000.

Freya and Benji glanced at one another before turning their attention to their shoes. It was hard to tell which of their faces was the reddest.



Chapter 14

Real Superpowers

“So, you’re really not superheroes?” asked Benji dejectedly, after having time to take it all in.

“Well, perhaps not in the way you two are imagining,” Miss Higgins began, sensing his displeasure. “We are teachers. Maybe that’s rather like being superheroes anyway.”

“What d’you mean?” asked Freya half-heartedly, raising an eyebrow.

“You see, perhaps teachers have more superpowers than

you realise! We don't just help you to learn – although the power of learning is a rather good one. We have powers like spreading kindness, building confidence and sparking imaginations. Those are pretty cool powers to possess, you know,” Miss Higgins went on.

“More than that,” Mr Jay joined in. “You didn't even realise, but we have been passing those powers on to you, too.”

“Huh?” Benji responded with a jerk of his shoulders.

As Mr Jay confessed, it turned out that the two teachers had realised a little while ago that the children were acting suspiciously themselves and soon understood what they thought and what they were trying to do. Instead of revealing that they knew, the teachers used the opportunity to their advantage. Miss Higgins had shown them how good it felt to have kindly helped their classmate, William, with his learning; Mr Jay had helped them to build their confidence and manners by deliberately choosing them to show the local councillors around school.

“And the money you left behind earlier – that wasn't an accident either?” realised Benji.

“No,” said Miss Higgins. “You’ve shown what good citizens you are, even without the kind of superpowers that you were imagining. Being a hero is not just about flying or being invisible. Not all heroes wear costumes and capes. Maybe all teachers are superheroes in a different way – and maybe all children can be, too.”

Benji and Freya both liked that thought. They smiled at each other and apologised to the teachers for all of their antics. Both teachers were more than happy with the apology and said that they were equally happy at how much the superheroes topic had sparked the children’s imaginations.

All four of them thought that it was about time they returned to the summer fair to relieve Mr Wilstead of his duties on Splat the Rat and make sure everyone was enjoying themselves while raising lots of money for a good cause at the same time. Plenty of children were delighted to see the return of the superheroes in their costumes so that they could pose for photos and get more high fives.

Chapter 15

What No One Noticed

“I guess I was wrong after all,” Benji admitted to Freya in between serving customers.

“Well, kind of,” she replied. “Perhaps Miss Higgins is right. Maybe all teachers are superheroes of a different kind – and maybe all children can be, too. It’s just that the superpowers are different from what you see in a comic book or movie.”

“I suppose,” said Benji, his chin a little higher and even the hint of a smile forming on his lips.

“We might not be able to fly or become invisible,” Freya continued. “But we have the power to spread kindness, like when we were friendly and polite to the visitors, or to build confidence in other people like William.”

“And the power of sparking imaginations!” Benji chimed.

“Well, you definitely have that!” agreed his friend.

As another customer swung the rounders bat and missed the rat shooting out from the bottom of the pipe, Mr Wilstead left the children to return to his

other duties. None of the children noticed as he put his hand to his earpiece and listened for a few seconds, then quietly whispered an instruction.

No one saw him catch the eye of Mr Jay, or the two teachers nod at each other in silent understanding. Mr Jay gave a similar silent signal to Miss Higgins and the two teachers disappeared into the staging area.

No one noticed the two teachers in costume emerge straight out of another exit at the back. And no one noticed as, quicker than the blink of an eye, the two teachers flew straight up into the air between the trees at the back of the field and soared away overhead to another dangerous situation that required the assistance of two secret superheroes.

No one except Benji that is, who spun around just in time to catch what he thought was a blurry glimpse of yellow and blue whizzing past in the sky.

“Did you see that?” he gasped.

“What?” replied Freya.

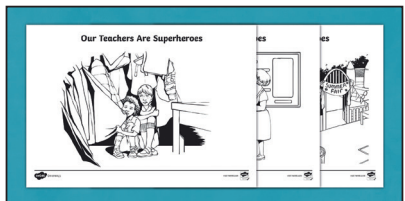
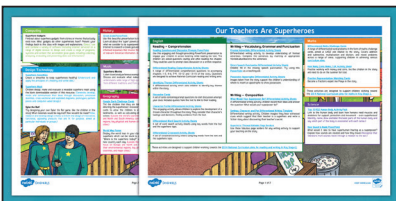
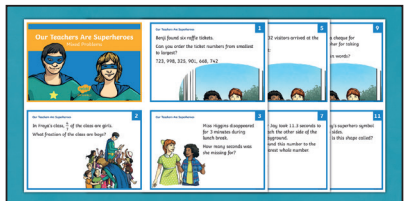
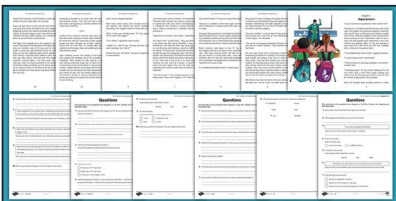
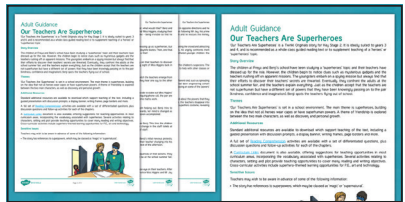
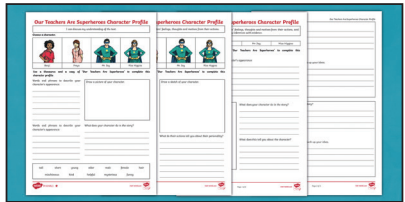
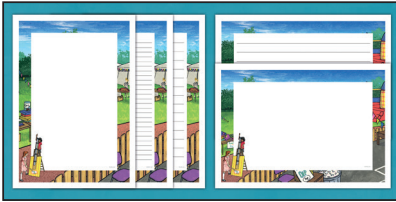
Benji paused. “Oh, nothing,” he said. “Maybe it was just my imagination again.”

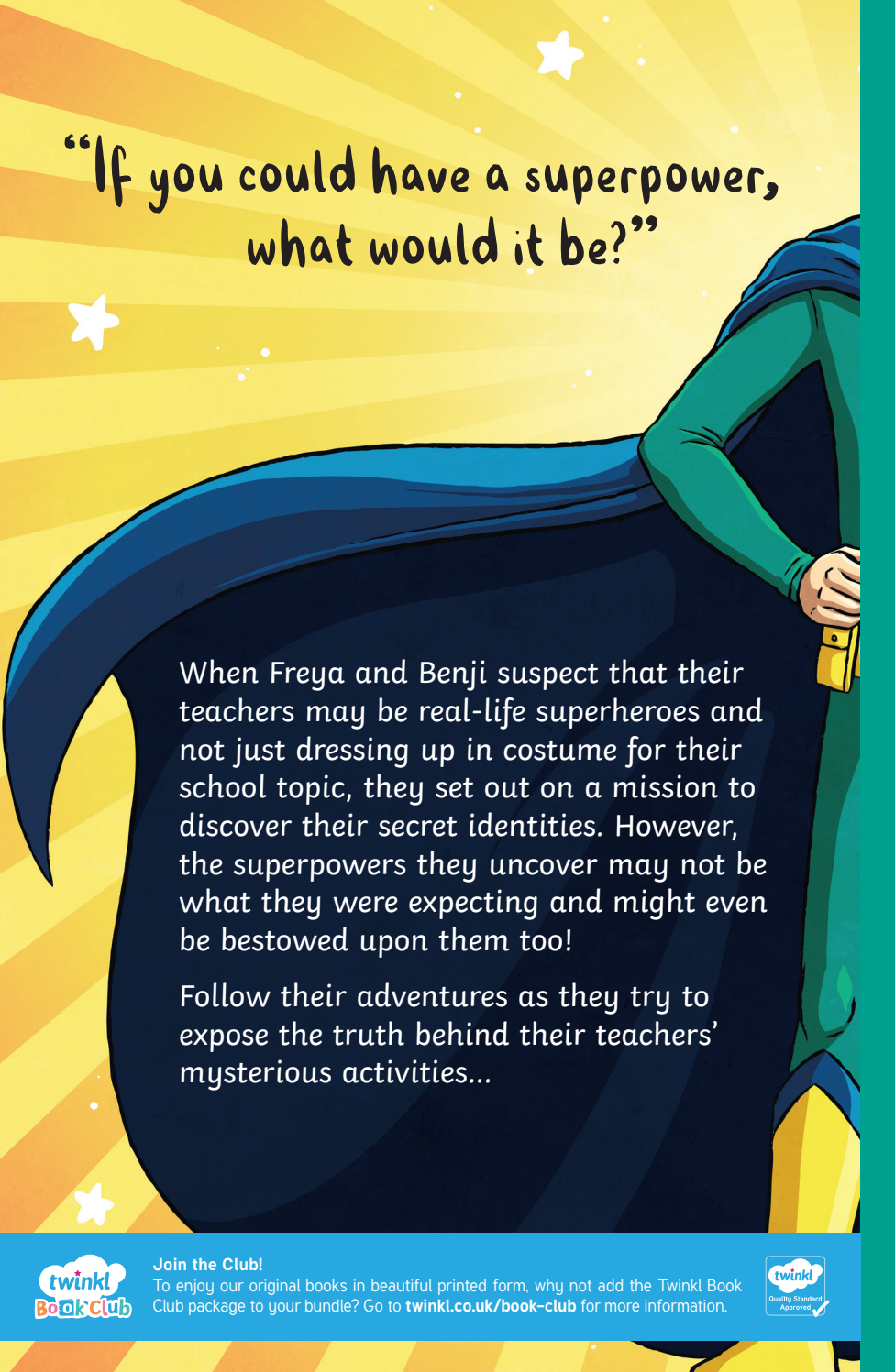




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“If you could have a superpower,
what would it be?”

When Freya and Benji suspect that their teachers may be real-life superheroes and not just dressing up in costume for their school topic, they set out on a mission to discover their secret identities. However, the superpowers they uncover may not be what they were expecting and might even be bestowed upon them too!

Follow their adventures as they try to expose the truth behind their teachers' mysterious activities...