

The Body in the Library

SUMMARIES

Part 1: Chapters 1–4

Colonel and Mrs Dolly Bantry are woken by their maid who says there is a body in their library at Gossington Hall. The dead girl is young, fashionably dressed, has dyed blonde hair and is wearing lots of make up. Colonel Melchett, the Chief Constable, personally comes to investigate the crime along with his Inspector – Slack. Mrs Bantry calls her friend, Miss Marple, to do some amateur detective work. The most likely suspect is a local man, Basil Blake. He likes parties, works in the film industry and has been seen recently with a blonde woman. Basil Blake is very rude to the police, but he has an alibi – he was at a party. Girl Guide, Pamela Reeves has been reported missing but she had dark brown hair. Then Melchett gets a call to say another girl is missing: Ruby Keene, a professional dancer from the Majestic Hotel. Superintendent Harper is already investigating the case. Ruby didn't turn up for her second show dance around midnight the night before. A guest at the Majestic, Conway Jefferson, reported her missing. Ruby's cousin, Josie Turner identifies the body as Ruby. Josie is dance and bridge hostess at the Majestic. Josie seems confused as to why Ruby was found at Gossington Hall. She says that she was angry with Ruby for missing her dance the evening before. The police discover that Colonel Bantry had had dinner at the Majestic the previous week, and that Ruby was last seen dancing with hotel guest George Bartlett. Mrs Bantry knows the Jeffersons, she suggests to Miss Marple that they go and stay at the Majestic Hotel to find out more.

Part 2: Chapters 5–8

Melchett, Slack and Harper are also at the Majestic Hotel investigating the crime. Adelaide Jefferson – Mr Jefferson's daughter-in-law – says she last saw Ruby dancing with George Bartlett after dinner. Adelaide played bridge with Josie, her brother-in-law Mark Gaskell, and her father-in-law. Raymond Starr, the other professional dancer, came looking for Ruby around midnight when they were meant to do their second dance, and then he and Josie went to look for her. The police interview George Bartlett – they can't decide if he is a fool or is just acting like one. No one saw Ruby leave the hotel. Adelaide's son by her first marriage, Peter, tells the policemen that his mum and his uncle didn't really like Ruby or that his grandfather liked her so much. Mark Gaskell warns them that Jefferson has a weak heart and should be kept as calm as possible. Sir Conway Jefferson is an invalid who lost his legs in an aeroplane crash that killed his wife, son and daughter. He had been planning to adopt Ruby and leave her most of his money. Jefferson says that neither Addie nor Mark need his money. Thinking he may be a suspect, Jefferson asks his friend Sir Henry Clithering, retired Commissioner of the London Police, to come and help. George Bartlett can't find his car. Inspector Slack finds Ruby's pink dance dress and shoes, fingernail clippings, and tissues with red lipstick and nail polish on them

in her room. Raymond Starr mentions that Josie was cross with Ruby and had said that she might be with 'that film man', i.e. Basil Blake. Another body is found inside a burnt-out car.

Part 3: Chapters 9–12

Mark Gaskell admits that he and Adelaide thought Ruby was a gold-digger. Addie's admirer, Hugo MacLean arrives. Peter shows Miss Marple, Dolly Bantry and Sir Henry a fingernail that Ruby broke on Josie's scarf the night before. Miss Marple says that explains why the dead girl had short nails then. The police find a button from a Girl Guide's uniform in the burnt-out car. The car is George Bartlett's. Melchett finds out that Mark Gaskell and Adelaide Jefferson are actually both poor. However, they both have the game of bridge as alibis for the time of Ruby's murder, although Mark Gaskell was out in his car earlier in the evening. George Bartlett has no motive. Adelaide confides to Dolly Bantry that she feels trapped living with her father-in-law. Mark Gaskell admits to Sir Henry that he needs to inherit Jefferson's money. Raymond Starr tells Sir Henry that he comes from a rich family who lost all their money.

Part 4: Chapters 13–17

One of the Girl Guides tells Miss Marple that Pamela had secretly met a film man who wanted her to be in his next film. Miss Marple hurries to Basil Blake's house and talks to Dinah Lee. She learns that their rug is missing and astutely advises Dinah that she and Basil should come clean about actually being married. Shocked that Miss Marple knows, Dinah asks if she has been to Somerset House. This gives Miss Marple an idea. Basil admits that although he didn't kill Ruby, he did find the body in his house when he came home from the party early. In a panic, he moved the body to Colonel Bantry's library. Slack arrests Basil, who now has no alibi. Miss Marple thinks Basil is innocent. She sets a trap to catch the real murderer. She gets Conway Jefferson to say that he is going to make a new will the next day leaving most of his money to charity. That night, Josie comes in through his window with a loaded syringe. The police are waiting for her. Miss Marple explains that it had to be Josie because she wrongly identified the dead body in the library as Ruby when it was in fact Pamela Reeves. Josie was secretly married to Mark Gaskell. They killed Ruby because they needed Jefferson's money, and tried to frame Basil Blake. They killed Pamela to give them both an alibi. Mark Gaskell pretended to be a film director. They made Pamela up to look like Ruby Keene and drugged her. Mark drove her to Basil's house and killed her *before* returning to play bridge. They drugged Ruby too. Later, Josie stole George Bartlett's car, put Ruby in it and set it on fire. Adelaide tells Jefferson that she's marrying Hugo McLean. Raymond is upset that Addie is not marrying him, and admits that he made up the story about being from a rich family.

The Body in the Library

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Part 1 (Chapters 1–4)

Before reading

1 Speaking

Write the title *'The Body in the Library'* on the board. Elicit the term *title*. Ask students to discuss with a partner:

- *What do you think the title tells us will happen in the story?*
- *What do you know about libraries?*

Students' first assumption may be of a public library or even a school or university library. If possible, show students an image of a large stately home and explain that houses such as these would have had their own private library. When many of these houses were built, people would have had to travel to big cities such as London to visit a public library. Having your own library was a sign both of wealth and higher education.

2 Research

Ask students to read the Cultural notes on pages 74 and 75 to set the scene of the story. You could ask them the following comprehension questions:

- 1 What is the large country house in the story called?
- 2 Who lives in it?
- 3 Which class do Colonel Bantry and Colonel Melchett belong to?
- 4 How do you know the Bantry's are rich?
- 5 What was the difference between life in a village and life in a town when this book was written?
- 6 Do you think this is still true?

After reading

3 Playing detective

Draw the following table on the board:

Victim's name	
Description of the victim	
Victim's profession	
Victim's place of work	
Approximate time of death	
Method of death	
Place body found	
Last person believed to have talked to the victim	

Say *The police need the facts about the murder. In pairs, fill in as much information as you can from memory and then look back through Part 1 of the story to find anything you are missing.* Put pairs together to compare their profiles and to correct or to add any additional information.

4 Playing detective

Start a *crime board*. Explain that detectives use a crime board to show what they know and for questions they may have about the crime.

On a very large piece of paper, write the name *Ruby Keene* in the centre. Then ask students the following questions and add information and questions to the board using arrows:

- *What places might be important?*
- *Who might be important?*
- *What clues are there?*
- *Who do you think the police should interview?*
- *What questions do you want to know the answers to?*

Display the crime board in each lesson.

See sample crime board on the next page.

5 Language

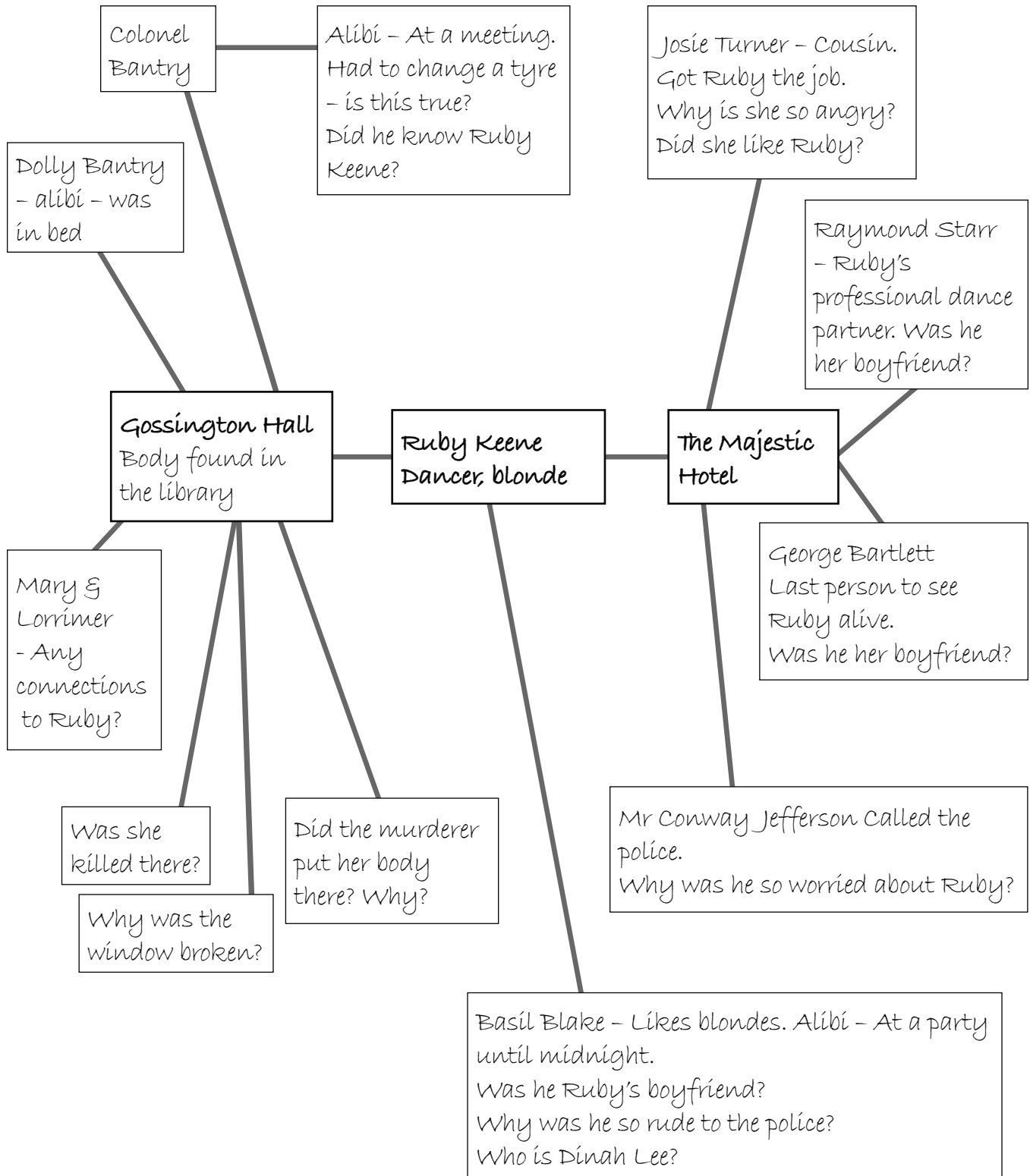
Display or ask students to turn to the description of the dead girl in Chapter 1 on page 3, from:

The library... to ... didn't look real.

Ask the following questions:

- 1 What adjectives are used to describe the dead girl's hair?
- 2 Is the girl a real blonde? How do you know?
- 3 What clothes is she wearing?
- 4 Do you think the girl had a lot of money? Why or why not?
- 5 What colour was her dress?
- 6 What material was her dress made from?
- 7 What made her dress shiny?
- 8 What has happened to her face?
- 9 Is her face smaller or larger than usual?
- 10 What is painted blood red?
- 11 Why does she not fit the look and feel of the Bantry's library?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



The Body in the Library

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Part 2 (Chapters 5–8)

Before reading

1 Speaking

Recap what has happened in the story so far. Write the following words on the board.

Gossington Hall	Ruby Keene
Miss Jane Marple	The Majestic Hotel

Ask students to explain how each one relates to Part 1 of *The Body in the Library*.

2 Research

In Chapter 8 on page 35, Miss Marple tells Sir Henry a fable about King Cophetua. Ask students to research fables and in particular the fable of King Cophetua (also called The King and the Beggar Maid). They may find or you could show them the painting of the fable by Edward Burne-Jones. Discuss the fact that fables are tales with morals or lessons. Ask students if they know and can tell any other fables from their own or another culture. Ask students to explain or tell the fable of King Cophetua. Can students work out what the moral or lesson of this story is? Ask them if they can imagine how this fable might link to the story *The Body in the Library*.

They could use an encyclopaedia, a library, the internet and the Cultural notes on page 77 at the back of the book.

3 Language

In Part 2, Miss Marple says:

'I think there was a very careful plan.'

Write the word '*premeditated*' on the board and ask students to find out what it means using dictionaries and/or thesauruses.

Discuss how a murder, such as Ruby's, could be planned or could be unplanned. Ask students to think of two different scenarios for Ruby's murder – one that is premeditated and one that is unpremeditated.

You could divide students into two groups and allocate a scenario to each. Ask groups to present their scenarios and ask the rest of the class how convincing they think it is.

After reading

4 Playing detective

Draw students' attention back to the crime board and ask them if they would like to add any further information, connections or questions. Make sure they have written a full description of Ruby Keene on it – including how she was dressed, Miss Marple's observations of the body, her age and her job.

5 Writing

Ask students to look back at page 28 to the conversation between Superintendent Harper and Colonel Melchett. Ask students to find the two reasons or motives they discuss for Ruby's death.

Ask students to choose one of the possible reasons for Ruby's death and write a paragraph explaining why they think this is correct.

Suggest a suitable word length.

6 Speaking

Choose five confident students or ask for volunteers to play the five detectives. Allocate roles and if possible give them name badges on sticky notes or stickers.

Write *press conference* on the board and elicit or explain what this is – when there is a murder investigation, the police usually have a press conference where journalists from newspapers can ask questions about the case.

Explain that the rest of the class are going to be the journalists and they should work in pairs or threes to write down some questions they would like to ask one or more of the detectives. These could be questions about:

- how they got involved in the case,
- what they think of different characters,
- what they think of the murder,
- who they think did it,
- what clues they have found, etc.

Whilst the journalists are thinking of suitable questions, the detectives should brainstorm their characters together. They should think about:

- each one's personality,
- how they feel,
- their job or their friends,
- who they know or don't know, etc.

When each group is ready, ask the detectives to sit on chairs facing the journalists. Introduce each detective and ask the first question yourself, this could be *Could you please explain how you heard about the murder*. Make sure each detective has had a chance to answer the first question. Then ask journalists who have a question to put their hands up. Invite a journalist to ask their question by naming them and saying *Alicia, who would you like to ask your question to?* Continue until there are no further questions or until you think everyone has run out of steam. Finish by saying: *I'm afraid there is no more time as our detectives must get back to work.*

Start a round of applause for the detectives.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Part 3 (Chapters 9–12)

Before reading

1 Guess

Display the crime board students have worked on in Parts 1 and 2. Explain that students have now met all the main characters in the story. In groups of three, ask students to discuss theories they have on who committed the murder and why. Ask groups to share their ideas with the class. (At this point they may choose to discard the theory about an old boyfriend of Ruby's being the murderer – do not confirm or reject any of their suggestions).

2 Language

Explain that in Chapter 9, Mark Gaskell describes Ruby Keene as a *gold-digger*. Write the word on the board and ask students to find out what it means using the Internet, dictionaries and the glossary at the back of the book.

Ask:

- Do you have similar phrases in your language?
- Do you think Ruby was trying to get Conway Jefferson's money?
- Or do you think she was just being friendly?
- Do you think she really liked him?
- Why do you think Mark Gaskell finds it hard to believe that Ruby and Conway Jefferson might have actually liked each other?

After reading

3 Playing detective

Draw students' attention back to the crime board and ask them if they would like to add any further information, connections or questions.

Then ask students if they are any nearer to working out who did it and why? Accept all reasonable suggestions. Encourage students to query each other's theories as this is what detectives must do.

4 Guess

Reread aloud or play the audio of the following dialogue between Sir Henry and Miss Marple on page 43:

Sir Henry said: 'You think there was a second murder?'

'Well, why not?' Her eyes met his. 'When someone has murdered one person, it isn't as hard to murder another. Or even a third person.'

'Miss Marple, you worry me,' said Sir Henry. 'Do you think there's going to be a third murder? And do you know who is going to be murdered?'

'Yes and yes, I think I do.'

Ask students to work in pairs and to discuss who they think Miss Marple thinks will be murdered next and why.

Ask volunteers to share their ideas with the rest of the class, explaining their reasoning. Students could vote on the most likely victim.

5 Writing

Play the section from Part 3, Chapter 11 where Addie explains how she feels to Mrs Bantry from:

'I suppose Conway is lonely..,' on page 47 to 'There was a warning in his voice. on page 48.

Say *Imagine you are Addie. Write a diary entry written on the day you find out that Jeff is planning to adopt Ruby.*

Suggest a suitable word length.

You could put students into pairs and ask them to role play a conversation between Addie and Jeff. Say *Imagine you are Jeff and you have read Addie's diary. You go to find her to talk about it. Role play the conversation.*

Circulate, making a note of nice phrases used or interesting directions of conversation. Comment on or write these up on the board for all students at the end of the role-play.

You could also make a note of common errors and do a correction activity as a class, keeping the errors anonymous.

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Part 4 (Chapters 13–17)

Before reading

1 Playing detective

Ask students to recap the main events in the case so far. Encourage them to use the crime board to help them. You could move around the class, so that each student says one point that they think is the most important in the case, without repeating what another student has said (if you have a very small class you may want to repeat this two or three times).

2 Research

In Chapter 14 on page 60, Dinah Lee mentions Somerset House. This helps Miss Marple to solve the case. Ask students to find out what Somerset House was. They could use the internet and the Cultural note on page 77 at the back of the book. Once they understand what it was, ask them if they can think how this might help Miss Marple solve the case. Do not confirm or reject any theories at this point.

After reading

3 Speaking

Ask the class *Were you surprised to learn that Mark and Josie were the murderers?* Ask students to discuss in groups how this compared to their own ideas of who the murderer was. Encourage groups to look back at the crime board to see if the clues were there or what they may have missed.

Ask the following questions:

- 1 What facts does Miss Marple say she noticed about the body?
- 2 Why did the murderers put the body in Basil Blake's house?
- 3 What went wrong with their plan?
- 4 Who does Miss Marple say would have benefitted financially from Ruby's death?
- 5 Who does Miss Marple say she knew was involved with the crime but she thought was innocent because he didn't have a motive?
- 6 How did Dinah Lee help Miss Marple solve the case?
- 7 What convinced Miss Marple that the body in the library was not Ruby Keene?
- 8 How did this prove that Josie was involved in the murders?
- 9 Why couldn't Mark Gaskell just tell his father-in-law that he was married?
- 10 Who was killed first: Pamela or Ruby?

- 11 How did Miss Marple know that Josie would try to murder Conway Jefferson that night?

4 Writing (Students could do both or either Task A and Task B.)

Task A

Get students in threes to write a short dialogue between Pamela Reeves and the murderers. They can choose either option A or option B. You could print out the options or write them on the board. Try to have an even number of groups doing each option.

Option A: Write the dialogue when Mark Gaskell approaches Pamela Reeves for the first time and tells her he's a film director and is looking for a young girl to be in his film. Think about:

- how Pamela feels about a strange man talking to her,
- what story Mark tells her,
- how he convinces her to meet him after Girl Guides to do a film test,
- how he tells her to lie to her parents and friends about where she is going,
- whether Pamela needs to be persuaded or if she is happy to meet him.

Option B: Write the scene when Mark Gaskell takes Pamela to the Majestic Hotel to meet Josie who is pretending to be a make-up person from the film. Think about:

- how Pamela feels about having a 'professional' make-up woman do her hair, make-up and nails,
- what Josie and Mark might say to each other in front of Pamela,
- what questions Pamela might ask about the film test she has to do,
- how Josie and Mark drug Pamela,
- what they do when Pamela falls 'asleep' from the drug.

Each group could rehearse and then perform their dialogue for the rest of the class.

Task B

Say *Imagine you are one of the murderers: Mark Gaskell or Josie Turner. At the police station, Superintendent Harper asks you to write a statement which explains when, how and why you decided to kill Ruby Keene and Pamela Reeves. Write the statement.*

Suggest a suitable word length.

ANSWER KEY (CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES)

Part 1 (Chapters 1–4)

1 Speaking

Answers will vary. Students should be able to work out that a dead body will be found in a library. We can assume that the body has been murdered and that therefore there will be an investigation by the police to try to find out who the murderer is and why the person was killed.

2 Research

- Gossington Hall
- Colonel and Mrs Dolly Bantry
- the upper class/landed gentry
- They have a large country house with servants.
- Life in a village was much quieter and slower than life in a town, everyone knew everyone else. They knew a lot about each other's lives.
- Answers will vary.

3 Playing detective

Victim's name	Ruby Keene
Description of the victim	18, five feet four inches tall, thin, blonde hair, blue eyes – believed to be wearing a white evening dress and sandals
Victim's profession	Dancer/dance hostess
Victim's place of work	The Majestic Hotel, Danemouth
Approximate time of death	10 pm – 12 am
Method of death	Strangled
Place body found	The library at Gossington Hall
Last person believed to have talked to the victim	George Bartlett who danced with her at the Majestic Hotel at around 10.30 pm.

4 Playing detective

Answers will vary. See Sample crime board in activity notes.

5 Language

- fashionably curly, dyed, blonde
- No – her hair has been dyed – this means the colour has been changed.
- an evening dress.
- No, because the dress is described as cheap.
- white

- silk
- sparkles
- It's swollen.
- larger
- her lips and her fingernails
- Because the library is old and belongs to the upper classes, she is *young, new and crude* i.e. simple and unsophisticated – she seems of a lower class.

Part 2 (Chapters 5–8)

1 Speaking

Gossington Hall – the large house owned by Colonel and Mrs Bantry where the body was found.

Ruby Keene – the dead girl's name

Miss Jane Marple – a woman from the village who is friends with Mrs Bantry. She has a reputation as an amateur detective.

The Majestic Hotel – the place where Ruby worked as a dance hostess with her cousin Josie Turner.

2 Research

King Cophetua (The King and the Beggar Maid)

According to legend, King Cophetua was an African king who shows little interest in all the rich, well-bred women presented to him. But one day he meets a beggar girl outside of the palace. Her face is beautiful, but what King Cophetua falls in love with is her beautiful soul. Despite her low status, King Cophetua makes her his queen.

*Her arms across her breast she laid;
She was more fair than words can say:
Bare-footed came the beggar maid
Before the king Cophetua.
In robe and crown the king stepped down,
To meet and greet her on her way;
"It is no wonder," said the lords,
"She is more beautiful than day".
As shines the moon in clouded skies,
She in her poor attire was seen:
One praised her ancles, one her eyes,
One her dark hair and lovesome mien:
So sweet a face, such angel grace,
In all that land had never been:
Cophetua swore a royal oath:
"This beggar maid shall be my queen!"*
—The Beggar Maid

(written 1833, published 1842) by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Miss Marple is suggesting that Conway Jefferson is similarly attracted to Ruby (though not as a wife) because she is also from a different class than the women he

usually meets, and it makes him feel good about himself to be able to shower her with gifts and offer her a better life than the one she currently leads. She in turn perhaps idolises him in the same way as the beggar maid does with King Cophetua.

3 Language

'premeditated' means a crime that is planned or thought of before it is done.

4 Playing detective

Sample answers:

They might want to add the names Adelaide Jefferson and Mark Gaskell. They might want to add under both of these that Peter Carmody says neither of them liked Ruby very much and that they would lose money if Ruby received money in Jeff's will. Under George Bartlett they might want to add that his car is missing. Under Mr Jefferson they might want to add that he has a weak heart and that he was planning to adopt Ruby and change his will. Under Colonel Bantry they might want to add that he had dinner at The Majestic on Tuesday last week, etc.

5 Writing

Answers will vary.

6 Speaking

Answers will vary.

Part 3 (Chapters 9–12)

1 Guess

Answers will vary.

2 Language

See glossary for definition. Encourage students to mention differences in age and class (wealth, education, sophistication, experience) when discussing reasons why Mark Gaskell might think the friendship between Ruby and Conway Jefferson could not be sincere.

3 Playing detective

Sample answers:

They might want to add under Adelaide's name that she is poor and was worried about Peter's future if Jeff didn't leave him any money in his will. Under Mark Gaskell's name they might want to add that he wasn't writing letters before the bridge game but went for a drive in his car. And that Mark Gaskell needs money badly. Under George Bartlett they might want to add that his car has been found burnt and

ANSWER KEY (CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES)

there is a body inside it – was he driving the car? If not, who stole his car? Has he got a motive? They might want to add Pamela Reeves' name and that she was a girl guide who has gone missing. Did she know Ruby Keene? Did she see or hear something to do with the murder? They might want to add Hugo McLean to the crime board with an arrow to Addie: Is he her boyfriend? Did he kill Ruby for Addie? They might want to draw an arrow from Raymond Starr to Addie too and add that Addie has been having tennis lessons. Is Raymond Starr in love with her? Did he kill Ruby for Addie? They might want to draw a line from Ruby Keene to Pamela Reeves with a question mark and write: Are their murders connected? Under Ruby Keene they might want to add that she was drugged: Who drugged her and why? Under Conway Jefferson they might want to add: Was somebody hoping the shock of Ruby's death would kill him? etc.

4 Guess

Answers will vary.

5 Writing

Answers will vary.

- 9 Because Mr Jefferson would probably have given him no money in his will and Mark Gaskell was poor and owed people money.
- 10 Pamela
- 11 Because Conway Jefferson told Mark that he was going to change his will the next day and give all his money to charity so Mark and Josie needed to kill him before he could do this as they needed his money.

4 Writing

Answers will vary.

Part 4 (Chapters 13–17)

1 Playing detective

Answers will vary.

2 Research

See cultural note 10 on page 77.

3 Speaking

- 1 She was quite young, she bit her fingernails and her teeth stuck out.
- 2 So that the police would suspect Basil Blake and not look too closely at the Jefferson family.
- 3 Basil Blake moved the body and then the police did start to look at the Jefferson family.
- 4 Mrs Jefferson and Mr Gaskell
- 5 Basil Blake
- 6 She mentioned Somerset House which made Miss Marple realise that if either Addie or Mark was secretly married and Jeff found out, they would lose their inheritance. Being married would give either of them a motive.
- 7 Her nails were bitten not cut short.
- 8 She identified the body in the library as Ruby when she must have known it wasn't.