

44 Tiny Secrets

Teaching Guide

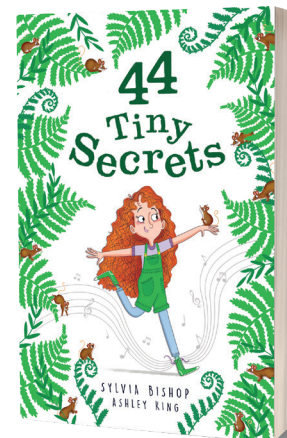
ABOUT THESE RESOURCES

This pack contains **BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS** about the whole book, and the following resources for each chapter:

- **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**
- **COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS** – suitable for guided reading sessions or for written work
- **WRITING EXERCISES**

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- Did you like everyone in the Bow-Linnet family? Why/why not?
- Did you guess the family's secrets? Or did you have other ideas of your own about what the truth might be?
- Betsy's mother says, "Don't waste time on something you don't love." Do you agree with this?
- At some points in the book Betsy gets very nervous and has to conquer her nerves. Have you ever felt nervous? What did you do about it?
- What tricks would you teach the forty-four tiny mice?



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Chapter 1: A Terrible Disappointment

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

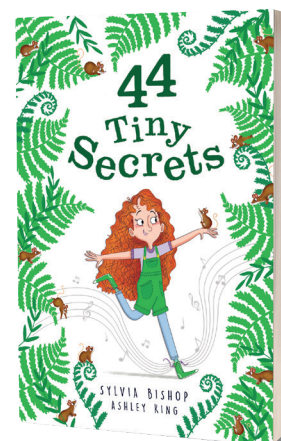
- We haven't met Betsy's parents yet. What do you think they will be like?
- Do you think Betsy's plan to impress her parents with her piano playing is a good idea? Why/why not?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Betsy's house is full of 'rare and exotic' plants called ferns. What does the word 'exotic' mean? (pg. 1)
- In this chapter we are introduced to Betsy. What kind of character do you think she is and why? Find two examples from the text that tell you about Betsy's personality
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy's parents arrive home. What do you think might happen next? Why do you think this?
- What is Betsy's last name?
- Summarise this chapter in your own words

WRITING EXERCISE

- At the end of this chapter, Betsy's parents have just arrived home. What do you think they might be like? Use your own imagination to write a description of them both.



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Chapter 2: A Terrible Mess

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Betsy is very nervous before she plays. Have you ever felt nervous like this?
- What do you think of Betsy's parents, now you have met them?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

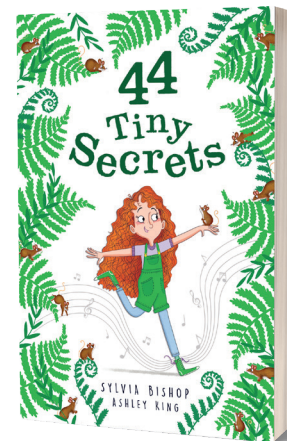
- The author says that the house has to be 'spruced up' before the party. What does the phrase 'spruced up' mean?
- In this chapter we meet Betsy's parents properly for the first time. What kind of character do you think Bella Bow-Linnet is? Why do you think this?
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy is just about to play the piece of music she has been practising. Do you think her performance will go well? Why do you think this?
- The author describes Betsy's parents from above first, and then describes how they look from the ground. Why do you think the author has chosen to do this?
- Betsy's father gives her a flower for her hair to wear to the party. What kind of flower is it? (page 30)

WRITING EXERCISE

In this chapter, we learn what Betsy's house looks like from her favourite spot, up by the bannisters. What can you see from your favourite spot in your house? Write a description. (You can write about an imaginary house if you prefer.)

You could begin:

The best place in the house to sit was... From here, YOUR NAME could see...



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Chapter 3: A Terrible Tragedy

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

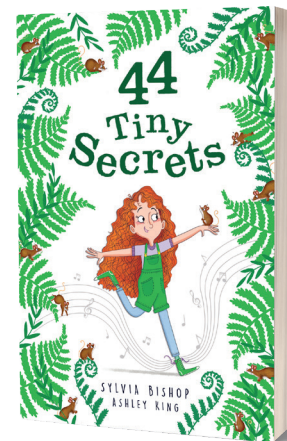
- This is a difficult chapter for Betsy. What advice would you give her here?
- What do you think the letter might be about?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- This chapter is called 'A Terrible Tragedy'. What does the word 'tragedy' mean?
- How do you think Betsy feels after her performance? Find two examples from the text that show you why she feels this way.
- What is the name of the newspaper that writes about Betsy's performance?
- This chapter ends with Betsy receiving a mysterious envelope but waits until the next chapter to reveal who it is from. Why do you think the author keeps the reader waiting here?
- What do you think the letter might be about? Why do you think this?
- Summarise everything that happens in this chapter after the end of the party.

WRITING EXERCISE

- Write a diary entry from Betsy's point of view about the events of this chapter.



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Chapter 4: Gloria Sprightly

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Would you have said yes or no to Gloria's offer?
- What do you think her 'unusual' method might be?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- When Betsy finds the envelope, she thinks "it felt wrong to tear it open in the hall" (page 58.) Why do you think Betsy thinks this?
- The chapter includes the entire letter that Betsy receives, allowing the reader to read the exact wording. Why do you think the author has chosen to include a copy of the whole letter?
- What is the name of the person who wrote the letter to Betsy?
- After delivering her reply to the letter, Betsy rushes back home and pretends to her parents that she has been there the whole time. She does this by looking at the nearest book with 'rapt attention'. What does the word 'rapt' mean?
- Summarise everything that happens in this chapter in 3 – 5 sentences.
- Betsy receives another letter from the same person, telling her to expect a parcel the next morning. The chapter ends with Betsy guessing, incorrectly, what will be in the package. What do you think might be in it? Why?

WRITING EXERCISE

- Write your own reply to Gloria Sprightly's letter. You can decide whether to say yes or no to her! And you might want to ask some questions...



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Chapter 5: The Unusual Method

DISCUSSION QUESTION

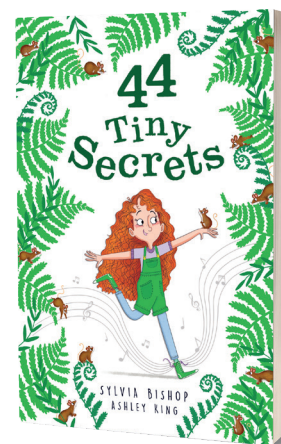
- Do you think the mice are going to help Betsy, or get her into more trouble? What do you think might happen?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- The author notes that Betsy's grandad was 'happily pruning an obviously dead plant' when her package arrived. What does the word 'pruning' mean?
- What does Betsy find in her package?
- The author says Betsy read one part of the letter six times. Why do you think Betsy read this section so many times?
- The letter that comes with the package explains in detail how it will help Betsy with the piano. Summarise in a few sentences how the contents of the package will help Betsy.
- Betsy decides not to use the contents of the package even though it does exactly what she needs it to do. Why do you think she decides she doesn't want to use it? What stops her?
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy's family decides to celebrate her newfound piano skills. What do you think might happen next? Why?

WRITING EXERCISE

- Make a leaflet with instructions for looking after African pygmy mice. You can use the information in this chapter, and add in some more research of your own if you like.



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Chapter 6: A Real Pianist

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Betsy is in a tricky situation here. What would you do?
- At the end of the chapter she wonders if she is going to meet Gloria Sprightly. Do you have any ideas about the mysterious Gloria?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How does Betsy feel in this chapter? How can you tell she feels this way?
- Betsy excuses herself from tea claiming to have a stomach ache, but the author reveals that her 'conscience was the bigger problem'. What does the word 'conscience' mean?
- In this chapter, Betsy talks to the mice even though they cannot answer or understand her. Why do you think the author has chosen to have Betsy speak aloud to the Mice? What effect does it have?
- In this chapter, Betsy's mother gives her a gift. What is the gift?
- At the end of this chapter, Betsy is booked to perform at the Royal Albert Hall. What do you think might happen next? Why?
- Summarise everything that happens in this chapter in 3 – 5 sentences.

WRITING EXERCISE

- Make a poster advertising the Gala concert, including special guest Betsy Bow-Linnet.



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Chapter 7: The Royal Albert Hall

DISCUSSION QUESTION

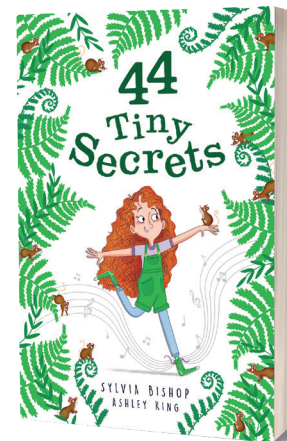
- Betsy spends the chapter getting ready to perform for 5,272 people. Would you find that exciting, or scary?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Betsy agrees to perform instead of an 'alpine horn trio'. What does the word 'trio' mean?
- Do you think Betsy is looking forward to her performance at the Royal Albert Hall? How do you know that she feels this way?
- The author explains what usually happens when Betsy visits the Royal Albert Hall, and then describes how this visit is different. Why do you think the author has chosen to do this?
- What is the name of the woman who greets Betsy and Grandad when they arrive at the Royal Albert Hall?
- Summarise everything that happens between Betsy arriving at the Royal Albert Hall and Betsy going onstage to perform in your own words.
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy's mice have gone missing! What do you think might happen next? Why?

WRITING EXERCISE

- Write a newspaper report about the concert, describing all the events in this chapter.



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Chapter 8: Night

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

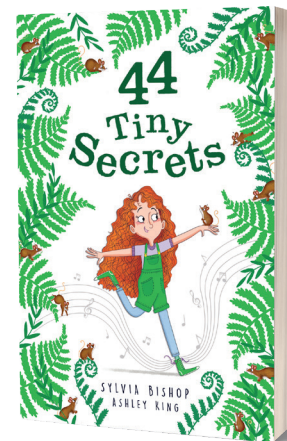
- Tired and upset, Betsy thinks *I hate my mum*, and then quickly changes her mind. Why do you think she felt this way? Does it mean she really hates her mum?
- Betsy's dad seems to know about the mice. How do you think he knows?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Summarise everything that happens from the beginning of the chapter to the point at which Betsy begins hunting down her mice, in your own words.
- Betsy hides in the Royal Albert Hall until everyone inside goes home. Where does Betsy hide?
- The author asks the reader a rhetorical question in this chapter: 'Have you ever worked all through the night, alone?'. This is a type of question that does not require an answer; instead, the question is asked to make the listener think about what their answer might be. Why do you think the author has chosen to use a rhetorical question here?
- How do you think Betsy feels in this chapter? What shows you that she feels this way? Does she feel the same way the whole way through the chapter?
- No matter what time it is outside, the inside of the Royal Albert Hall is described as the same 'relentless red'. What does the word 'relentless' mean?
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy's father arrives. Why do you think Bertram is there? Why do you think this?

WRITING EXERCISE

- Imagine how the mice feel, lost in this enormous concert hall. Rewrite the chapter from the perspective of a mouse.



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Chapter 9: Dawn

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- What do you think Betsy and her dad should do?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is the name of the mouse that is still missing at the beginning of this chapter?
- Betsy asks multiple times for her father to explain why he was there, but he puts her off and only reveals his reasons to Betsy *and* the reader later. Why do you think the author chose to delay revealing this information?
- How do you think Betsy feels after her dad shares his secret? Does she only feel one emotion? How do you know she feels this way?
- Summarise everything that Betsy's dad reveals to her in this chapter.
- The author describes how Bertram's beard 'quivered'. What does the word 'quivered' mean?
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy finds out some more information about Gloria Sprightly. What do you think might happen next? Why do you think this?

WRITING EXERCISE

- Imagine that you write an advice column, and Betsy has written asking what she should do. Write your article responding to her. Your aim is to persuade her that your advice is correct.

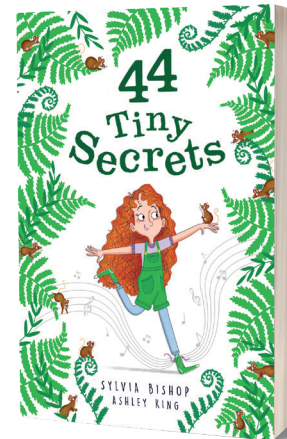
Here is her letter:

Dear Advice Anonymous,

My mother is a very brilliant concert pianist. This last week I have been pretending that I am a good pianist too, but the truth is I have been using some piano-playing mice. I just found out that my father has been doing this too, for seventeen years, and my mother doesn't know! I feel terrible about the lies, but she would be so hurt if she knew the truth. What should we do?

Yours in confusion,

Betsy Bow-Linnet



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Chapter 10: Gloria Sprightly Again

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

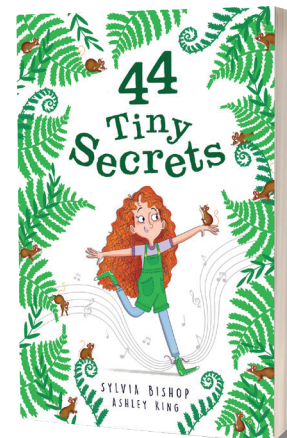
- What do you feel about Grandad's story?
- How do you think Bella is going to react to the family's secrets?

COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

- How do you think Grandad feels in this chapter? Why do you think this?
- Most of this chapter is made up of dialogue between Betsy and Grandad. Why do you think the author has chosen to do this?
- What job did Betsy's grandmother do?
- The author describes Grandad's elbow movement as the 'elbowy equivalent of a blush'. What does the word 'equivalent' mean?
- Summarise everything that Grandad tells Betsy in this chapter, in your own words.
- At the end of the chapter, Betsy and Grandad decide to 'unravel everything from the beginning'. What do you think might happen next? Why do you think this?

WRITING EXERCISE

- We don't find out what Bertram and Grandad said to Bella, or what she said to them. Write this scene yourself. Try to imagine what each person would feel, and want to ask or explain.



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Chapter 11: Unravelling

DISCUSSION QUESTION

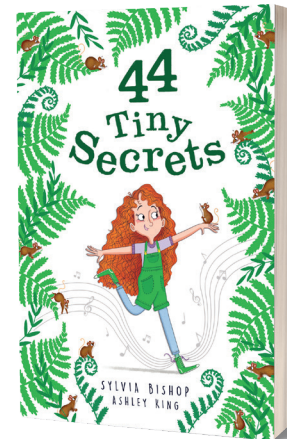
- The family go through a difficult argument in this chapter. Do you think it was worth it? Are things better or worse now than they were at the start of the book?

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- When they confront Bertram, the author describes how he ‘spluttered’. What does the word ‘spluttered’ mean?
- Grandad and Bertram speak to Betsy’s mother without Betsy in the room, so neither Betsy nor the reader find out exactly what was said. Betsy merely witnesses Bella storming out of the house from her favourite spot on the landing. Why do you think the author has chosen to structure the chapter in this way?
- How do you think Betsy’s mother, Bella, feels in this chapter? Does she feel the same way throughout the chapter? How do you know she feels this way?
- When Bella returns to the Bow-Linnet household, she and Betsy have a conversation. Summarise that conversation in your own words.
- What change does Betsy’s dad make to his appearance in this chapter?
- This is the final chapter of the book. What do you think might happen to the Bow-Linnet family after the book ends? Why do you think this?

WRITING EXERCISES

- Imagine you could teach the mice a new trick, now that they have finished playing the piano. Write a short story about the next adventure they have!



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