



The Last Thirteen: 13

By James Phelan

1. In groups of 2 or 3, design websites for either the Enterprise or the Academy. They are both very different institutions with some notable similarities—the Enterprise is a private company and the Academy is a private school, and both have secretive agendas.

- What information would you include on the website?
- How would you recruit outsiders to either institution?
- How would you describe what the institution does to the outside world?
- Remember, your website must also be informative and attractive in order to appeal to a first-time visitor.

2. The Academy is a boarding school for gifted students. In groups of 3 or 4, imagine you are the principal of the Academy.

- How would you organize the school?
- Consider things like lesson plans, recreation facilities and student support.
- How would you manage the different age groups that are enrolled in the school?

3. Dr. Dark has Sam keep a dream journal. This is actually a common practice among many people. What is a dream journal? What purpose does it serve? Keep your own dream journal over the course of a couple of weeks.

- Keep a journal and pen beside your bed.
- Write down everything you can remember from the previous night's dream/s as soon as you wake up in the morning.
- As you practice this activity, does recalling your dreams become easier, harder or stay the same? Why do you think this is the case?

4. Investigate the science of sleep and dreaming.

- What are the different stages of sleep?
- In which stage does most dreaming occur? Why do you think this is?
- How do scientists understand sleeping and dreaming?
- How do our waking lives affect our dreams and vice versa? You might consider things like déjà vu, and anxiety dreams.
- Research lucid dreaming and dream incubation.
- Do you think we have control over our dreams? Why/why not?

5. As an extension exercise, attempt either lucid dreaming or dream incubation over the course of a week.

- Dream incubation: Present a problem to students every day, such as a mathematical or logical problem. Ensure that it is one that is within their problem-solving capability. Have students focus on the problem before they go to sleep and record their impressions in the morning. Did anyone dream of the problem? Did anyone dream of a solution?
- Lucid dreaming: Have students make a recording of their voice repeating 'You are dreaming'. Before they go to bed, they should play the recording on a loop at a



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low volume, so it is the last thing they hear as they fall asleep. Ask them to record their impressions in the morning. Did anyone remain conscious that they were dreaming? Was anyone able to direct the path of their dream?

6. Dream interpretation is a practice that dates at least as far as back as 5000 BC, to ancient Mesopotamia. Investigate different schools of dream interpretation.

- What dream motifs (symbols or actions that often feature in our dreams) seem to recur?
- Compile a class list of common dream motifs, such as being chased, falling, climbing, the moon, hair and taking exams.
- Now split the class into pairs. Each pair should choose one dream motif and research how it is interpreted across several different schools of dream interpretation.
- Are there any similarities between the different interpretations? What do you make of these similarities?
- As an extension exercise, advanced students might research the theories of Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud and their competing schools of dream interpretation.

7. The Academy is built on an old monastery in the Swiss Alps.

- Do some image research of some of the more remote monasteries in Europe, such as the Greek Orthodox monasteries on Mount Athos and the Metéora, the Catholic monasteries of Santa Maria de Montserrat in Spain, St Martin du Canigou in France and Madonna del Sasso in Switzerland.
- Bearing in mind that they were built in medieval times and access to these buildings would have been even more difficult than it is today, why do you think the monasteries might have been built in such remote locations?

8. Most of 13 is written in third person, but the dream sequences occur in first person.

- Why do you think this is?
- What effect do you think this has?
- Think about some dreams you might have had where you were part of the action. If you wrote these dreams as a story, would you narrate it from first person, or write it from third person? Why?

9. Look at the headline that Sebastian shows Lora in Chapter 11 of the book. Imagine you are a news reporter who knows nothing about the Academy, Enterprise or the Dreamers.

- How would you make sense of the events that lead to the helicopter crash?
- What facts would be available to you?
- Using the headline and byline provided in the book, write the rest of the news report.

10. The portraits in the Academy's hall of honor in Chapter 13 of the book are comprised of thousands of tiny pictures. Create your own photo collage.

- Print a portrait of yourself on a piece of paper.
- Now, using images of varying sizes from magazines and newspapers, collage over your portrait.
- The trick is to match the colors of your face to the images you select.



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- As an extra challenge, you might try to create the photo collage using only portraits of other people.
 - An alternative activity might be to compile one class collage, with all students contributing images to form the big picture.

11. Sam is connected to the Dreamer's prophecy that the Professor shows him in Chapter 17.

- What is a prophecy?
- Take a look at some of the more well-known myths of the ancient and medieval worlds. How are these similar to each other and to the prophecy in 13?
- Why do you think prophecy is such a common method of communication in these and other stories?
- As an extension exercise, you might investigate how the motif of the prophecy is used in other works of fiction.

12. The prophecy in Chapter 17 is originally written in Egyptian hieroglyphs. Research hieroglyphs.

- Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs are arguably the most famous form of pictographic writing. What others exist?
- The Rosetta stone was instrumental in the decoding of Egyptian hieroglyphs. Why was this the case?
- Create your own pictographic alphabet.

13. *The Last Thirteen*: 13 ends with a cliff-hanger.

- What is a cliff-hanger?
- What purpose does it serve in a narrative?
- Are types of cliff-hangers more or less effective than others? Why?
- What stops a cliff-hanger from looking like the story simply hasn't been finished?
- Write a short story (no more than 1000 words) and end it with a cliff-hanger. What do you need to take into account to construct an effective cliff-hanger?

Teacher Tips adapted from Scholastic Australia