

The Explorer – Katherine Rundell

Y5 Reading 11.5.20

Jungles, Fred found, were full of corners and crannies; they held secrets. But the secrets emerged in the most unexpected ways. They would never, he thought, have found the scrap of paper that changed everything if it hadn't been for the joint efforts of the monkeys and the ants and the bees. Max saw them first, later that afternoon. He'd been lying on his back, staring at the sky, while Lila and Con and Fred sat by the fire and tried to make a plan. The problem was, despite being told very firmly to stay put, Max kept trying to explore; and he was a small five year old in a very large jungle.

1. What does 'crannies' mean?
2. What phrase shows that the jungle contains surprises?
3. Why does Max find it hard to follow the instructions?

It was just as Fred edged around the great trunk of the tree towards her that he saw it: something red, the size of an apple, tied tightly with vines to the branch. His breath stopped. He leant backwards to see better.....

He edged round her and upwards. He unwound the thing from the tree as quickly as he could, his hands shaking. The branch he was on was broad and he sat down on it, his legs hanging on either side.

Con approached and sat facing him, hugging the trunk with one shaking arm. 'Don't open it now!' she said. 'Wait until we're on the ground, you idiot!'

'Just quickly,' said Fred. It was a red leather pouch, with a leather drawstring and the remnants of gold embossed writing on the base. It was heavy. His hands were shaking as he opened it and pulled out a lump of metal.

'A tobacco tin,' he said. It was rusty, but less rusty than the sardine can.

'Let me see?' said Con. There were words on the side. She whispered them aloud, as if they were a spell. 'Colliers Finest Tobacco. London, Picadilly.'

'There's something else,' he said. The tree rocked suddenly in the wind and the thing slipped through his fingers. He caught it just in time; it was also rusty, and rough in his fingers. 'A penknife!' he said.

'Is that everything?'

'I think so.'

He brushed away a stray bee and upturned the pouch over his palm. A piece of paper fell out.

'What's that?' said Con. 'A letter?'

It was a sheet of paper from the blank end-pages of a book, marked in ink and labelled with neat block capitals. In the corner was a sketch of the points of a compass.

'It's a map,' he said.

1. What does 'remnants' mean?
2. What words were on the side of the tobacco tin?
3. What phrases tell you that Fred was nervous about what was inside the leather pouch?
4. Who could the map have belonged to?