

# Teaching Notes & Resources

Key Stage 2

Themes: Doing Good | Thievery | Schooling and Education | Friendship | Family

[Purchase \*Crookhaven: The School for Thieves\* >](#)



# Contents

Suitable for: Ages 9+

Subject Checklist: Literacy | Art, Design & Technology | PSHE

## LESSON 1: A School for Thieves

Objectives: Learn about Crookhaven school and its three principles; plan how to protect your school against a Crookling break-in.

## LESSON 2: Deception

Objectives: Understand the 'art' of deception and why it is a useful skill for a crook; create a new identity and disguise for Gabriel in his Deception classes.

## LESSON 3: Forgery

Objectives: Identify different forms of forgery and explain why forgery is a crime; a 'reflection' of the school year in Gabriel's voice.

# About the book

13-year-old Gabriel is a brilliant pickpocket, a skill which he uses to keep his often empty belly not quite so empty. And then one day, he's caught.

But instead of being arrested, he is invited by the mysterious Caspian Crook to attend Crookhaven – a school for thieves. At Crookhaven, students are trained in lock-picking, forgery and 'crim-nastics', all with the intention of doing good out in the world, by conning the bad and giving back to the innocent.

But ... can you ever really trust a thief?

With a school wide competition to be crowned Top Crook and many mysteries to uncover, Gabriel's first year at Crookhaven will be one to remember...



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# Lesson 1: A School for Thieves

Gabriel pulled out the wallet he had taken from Caspian at Torbridge station. ‘Here. Sorry I took this.’

‘Nonsense,’ Caspian said, taking the wallet and placing it on the table. ‘It brought you here, to Crookhaven, didn’t it?’

‘So this is really a school for criminals.’ It was meant as a question, though it came out more as an accusation.

‘We are so much more than that,’ Caspian said, sitting in a plush leather chair and gesturing for Gabriel to sit in a similar one across the table. ‘We are a home for the forgotten, a sanctuary for the lost and, yes, a training ground for the greatest crooks of the future.’

Gabriel shook his head. ‘But I’m not a . . . crook. I just steal what I need for me and Grandma. That’s all.’

Caspian nodded as if he’d heard countless similar protests, his slender fingers moving to his shaven chin. ‘The word *crook* is misunderstood, I think. You steal for the same reason we at Crookhaven steal – to put the world back in balance. Tell me, do you know how the Merciers acquired their fortune?’

## Discussion Questions:

- What has Gabriel taken from Caspian? Why did he take it?
- What does the word ‘crook’ mean? What is Crookhaven? How do Gabriel and Caspian describe it differently?
- What does ‘put the world back in balance’ mean? Can you think of any other characters from books or film who take from bad people to give to the innocent? Give examples.
- What is your impression of Caspian in this extract? Do you trust him? Pick examples from the text to support your ideas.
- Later in the story, we learn that Crookhaven’s three principles are: ‘Lie. But never lie to yourself. Cheat. But never cheat your friends. Steal. But never steal from those in need’ (page 99). What do you think about these principles? What is the school teaching about right and wrong?



## Activity: The Break-In!

In the story, Crooklings must attempt to prove themselves by breaking into a specific room within Crookhaven school. This is no easy task with the chosen room being heavily protected against intrusion!

- You have been tasked with protecting your school against a Crookling break-in! First of all, decide which room in the school you are going to protect and why, for example, the Headteacher's office or the library.
- Next, draw a floor plan of your school highlighting the room you are going to protect. Then sketch and label all the defences and security systems you would put in place to protect this chosen room.
- Use the checklist below to help defend your school against the crafty Crooklings

### Checklist

Have you ...

- Protected your I.T. systems against the notorious hackers – Brothers Crim?
- Made it difficult for Crim-nastics experts Amira and Penelope to get inside the building?
- Increased security to stop thieves like Gabriel stealing a key or picking a lock to get inside?
- Found a way to avoid deception – how will you know if a Crookling impersonates a student or teacher?
- Included pressure sensors, thermal cameras, and extra gardener guards just like Crookhaven?

Finally, share your floor plans together. Can you problem-solve and think like a Crookling to find a way around each other's security systems? Discuss which character you think would be the hardest to stop and why.



# Lesson 2: Deception

‘This is the first and most important lesson of this world,’ Mr Khan continued, his shoulders squarer, his eyebrows now lower over his eyes. ‘Never assume. If a heavy accent is all it takes to deceive you, this world and those in it will continue to deceive you at every turn. Begin, instead, with one single assumption: that you don’t know *anything*. From there, you can scratch away the lies until all that’s left is the truth.’

Mr Khan smiled then. A playful grin that made Gabriel lean in slightly. ‘But I am not here just to help you unravel the layers of lies that make up each of us. No, no. I am also here to show you how to *become* a living lie. To walk and talk differently, to disappear so deeply into the mannerisms of someone else that your own mother wouldn’t recognise you. Or, if you so choose, to be seen in a crowd, as if a spotlight is shining upon you.’ At this, Mr Khan’s eyes lingered on the blonde Legacy girl. He tilted his head slightly as if he didn’t quite know what to make of her. Then he moved on, hand gesturing to all the mirrors on the wall. ‘I can teach you to become anyone. To become *everyone*.’

## Discussion Questions:

- What do the words ‘assume’, ‘deceive’, and ‘mannerisms’ mean? Write down your definitions.
- According to Mr Khan, what is the most important lesson of this world and why?
- How does Gabriel respond to what Mr Khan says? What does this suggest?
- What does Mr Khan intend to teach the students of Class 1B? Make a list.
- Why do you think deception is a useful skill for a crook? How might it come in handy for Gabriel and his classmates in their pursuit of the Crooked Cup?



## Activity: A Crookling Disguise

- Gabriel is excited by the idea of deception and recreating himself after his difficult upbringing in Torbridge.
- Using Mr Khan's advice, create a new identity and disguise for Gabriel to help him succeed in his Deception classes. Begin by looking over some descriptions of Gabriel in the book:

*Name and age: Gabriel Avery, 13 years old*

*Lives (Town/City): Torbridge – no particular accent*

*Appearance: 'Scrawny' (page 5), 'scruffy', 'olive-skinned' (page 11), 'curly light brown hair' (page 13)*

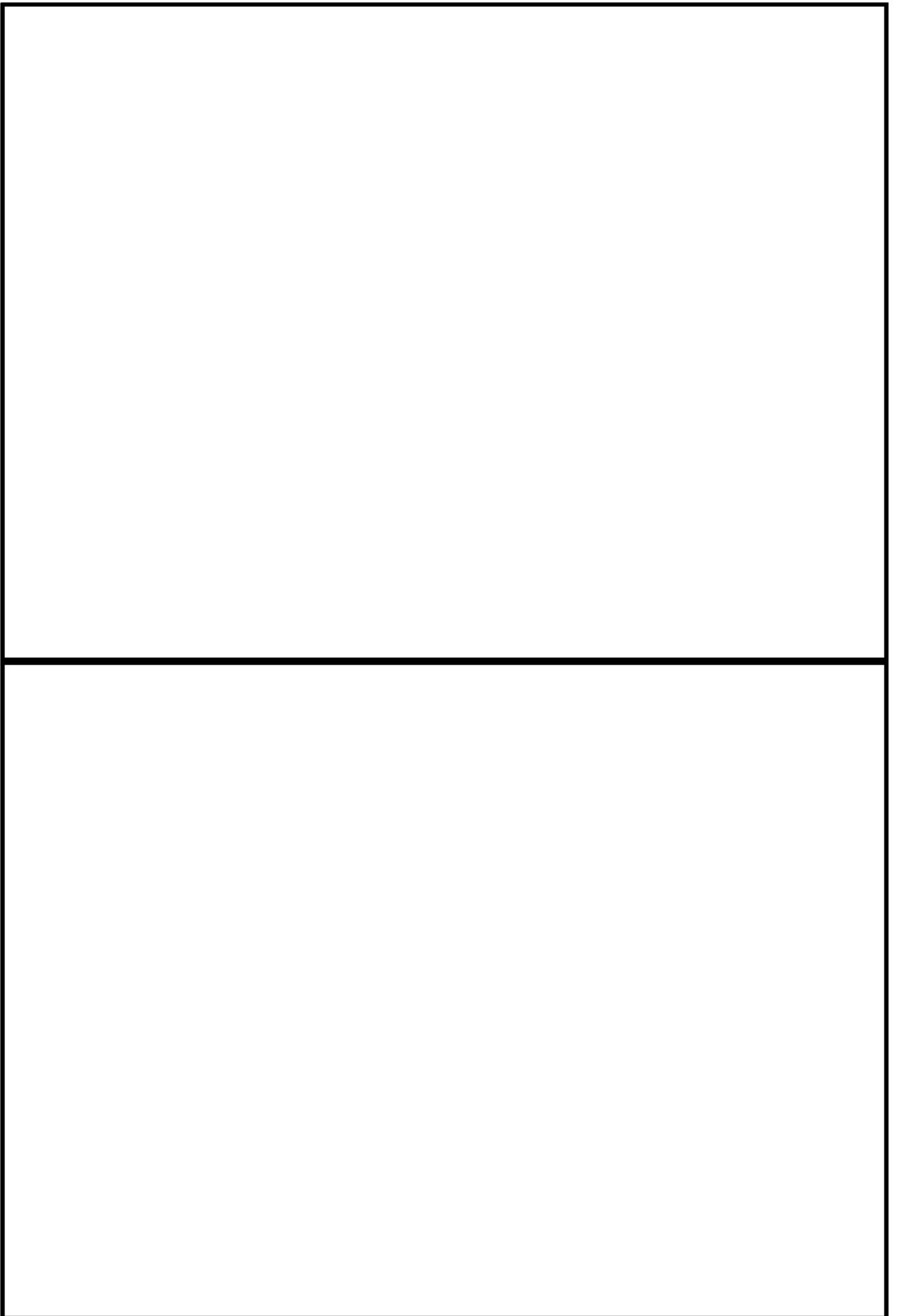
*Mannerisms: Flicks a coin in the air (page 6)*

- Then, complete the table for Gabriel's new identity and disguise including as much detail as possible.

False name and age:	
Lives (Town/City): Where are they from? Do they have an accent?	
Appearance: Eg. Hairstyle, eye colour	
Outfit/ Accessories: What do they usually wear or have with them? Eg. Glasses? A bag?	
Mannerisms: Do they have particular gestures or ways of behaving? Eg. The way they walk	

- Finally, sketch both pictures of Gabriel on the next page and compare the disguises you have chosen for him with a partner. Do you think you'll be able to deceive Mr Khan?





# Lesson 3: Forgery

‘Do you know why forgery is greatest of all art forms?’ Palombo pulled up a red velvet chair and sat in the centre of the room. ‘Because we master how to imitate a Master of their craft. Most of them – painters, sculptors, jewellers – spent their entire lives perfecting their art. And we learn the style and technique of not just one of these Masters, but countless. So what, then, does that make us?’

‘A master who’s mastered the Masters?’ Gabriel said.

‘The Swiss army knife of the Underworld?’ Villette added, smirking.

‘A crook of all trades?’ Ede chimed in.

1B snickered. Even Palombo smiled. ‘Laugh, yes, but you are all correct. It make us a master of the Masters, a Swiss army knife *and* a crook of all trades. In other words, it make us *adaptable*.’ He leant back in his chair and pressed the tips of his fingers together. ‘But all we speak about so far is *art* forgery. But we cover so much more than that here. Anyone tell me what else falls under the term “Forgery”?’

The class talked about forging documents and signatures, banknotes and coins, jewellery and even stamps. Gabriel absorbed all the information. But he’d known from the moment he saw it on his timetable that Forgery would be his least favourite class. Sitting still, working on something delicate like a painting or a sculpture, would never be interesting to him. His hands, now so agile from years picking pockets, would mean that he could get good enough, he thought. But he would never be great, like Penelope or, he guessed, Ji-a.



## Discussion Questions:

- What is forgery? Why is it a crime? Which of Gabriel's classmates are good at it?
- How many different types of forgery are listed in the extract?
- How does Palombo describe the art of forgery? Do you agree with him? Explain why/why not.
- Why does Gabriel believe that forgery will be 'his least favourite class'? Which skills does it require?
- Which of Class 1B's lessons would you enjoy the most and why? *Note: Don't forget about Crim-nastics and History of Crookery as well as the others you have discussed!*

## Activity: Year 1 at Crookhaven

- By the end of the story, Gabriel's life has completely changed by his experiences at Crookhaven and the people he has met.
- In Gabriel's voice, write a reflection at the end of the school year – this is a kind of forgery but don't worry, you won't get into trouble!
- Your challenge is to try and convince the reader that this is Gabriel's writing, you could even try a different form of handwriting to your own if it's neat enough – this is called calligraphy and is another lesson taught at Crookhaven.
- In your diary entry you could include:
  - Your feelings about Crookhaven and your lessons *Note: Use the timetable above to help you*
  - What you have learned about friendship
  - What you have learned about your parents and questions you still have
  - What you think your second year at Crookhaven will have in store i.e. the competition between Merits and Legacies
  - How much you miss your grandma and how excited you are to see her

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