



# The HOUSE of ONE HUNDRED CLOCKS

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EXTRACTS AND NOTES  
FOR KS2 TEACHERS

# INTRODUCTION



Suitable for: Ages 9+

Includes: Extracts from the text + corresponding discussion questions and activities

Themes: Clocks; Cambridge in the Edwardian Era; Inventions and Social Change; The Role of Women

## CONTENTS

- **EXTRACT 1:** Clocks (taken from Chapter Four – Questions)

*Objectives:* Explore how clocks are represented in the text; write a short story that a watch/clock would tell if it could talk.

*Subjects:* Literacy: Creative Writing, Art, Design and Technology, RSHE, Citizenship

- **EXTRACT 2:** Cambridge in the Edwardian Era (taken from Chapter Fourteen – Pebbles)

*Objectives:* Discuss what life was like in the Edwardian era; design a postcard from a visit to Edwardian Cambridge.

*Subjects:* Literacy, History, Art, Design and Technology, Geography, RSHE, Citizenship

- **EXTRACT 3:** Inventions and Social Change (taken from Chapter Sixteen – Book Maze)

*Objectives:* Identify how different inventions changed life in Edwardian England; create an advertisement and sales pitch for an invention.

*Subjects:* Literacy: Creative Writing, Writing to Persuade, Design Art and Technology, History, Science

- **EXTRACT 4:** The Role of Women (taken from Chapter Forty-One – Truth)

*Objectives:* Consider how life would have been different for women in 1905; roleplay the feelings and thoughts of female characters from the story.

*Subjects:* Literacy: Creative Writing, Writing in Role, Drama, History, RSHE, Citizenship

## ABOUT THE BOOK

June, 1905.

*Helena and her parrot, Orbit, are swept off to Cambridge when her father is appointed clock-winder to one of the wealthiest men in England. There is only one rule: the clocks must never stop.*

*But Helena discovers the house of one hundred clocks holds many mysteries; a ghostly figure, strange notes and disappearing winding keys... Can she work out its secrets before time runs out?*



# EXTRACT 1: CLOCKS



## TAKEN FROM CHAPTER FOUR – QUESTIONS

Helena paused in front of each clock. Their dark wooden cases were polished to a high shine. The outsides of the clocks were well cared for, that much was apparent. The pendulums were all swinging in different rhythms, the tick-tocks spilling over each other into a muddle of noise. The largest in the room was a clock with an ordinary brass face, but above it was an arched dial, which rotated to show the phases of the moon. Except the two painted moons were not like the one in the sky, they were grotesque childish faces with too-close together piggy eyes, rouged cheeks and pursed, rosebud lips. The same face had been painted onto the pendulum bob, which swung back and forth through the lenticular window, as if it was playing an eerie game of peek-a-boo. It was hypnotic and horrible at the same time. Helena shivered. Why had Mr Westcott filled a bedroom full to bursting with mechanical things? She was no stranger to the idea of obsession. Her father loved his work with a passion that had only increased since her mother died. This did not anger Helena, more caused a ball of disbelief to sit heavy in her stomach. It was plain to her that he loved things made out of wood and metal more than his own flesh and blood family. Maybe that was why her father seemed so sympathetic to Mr Westcott's demands?

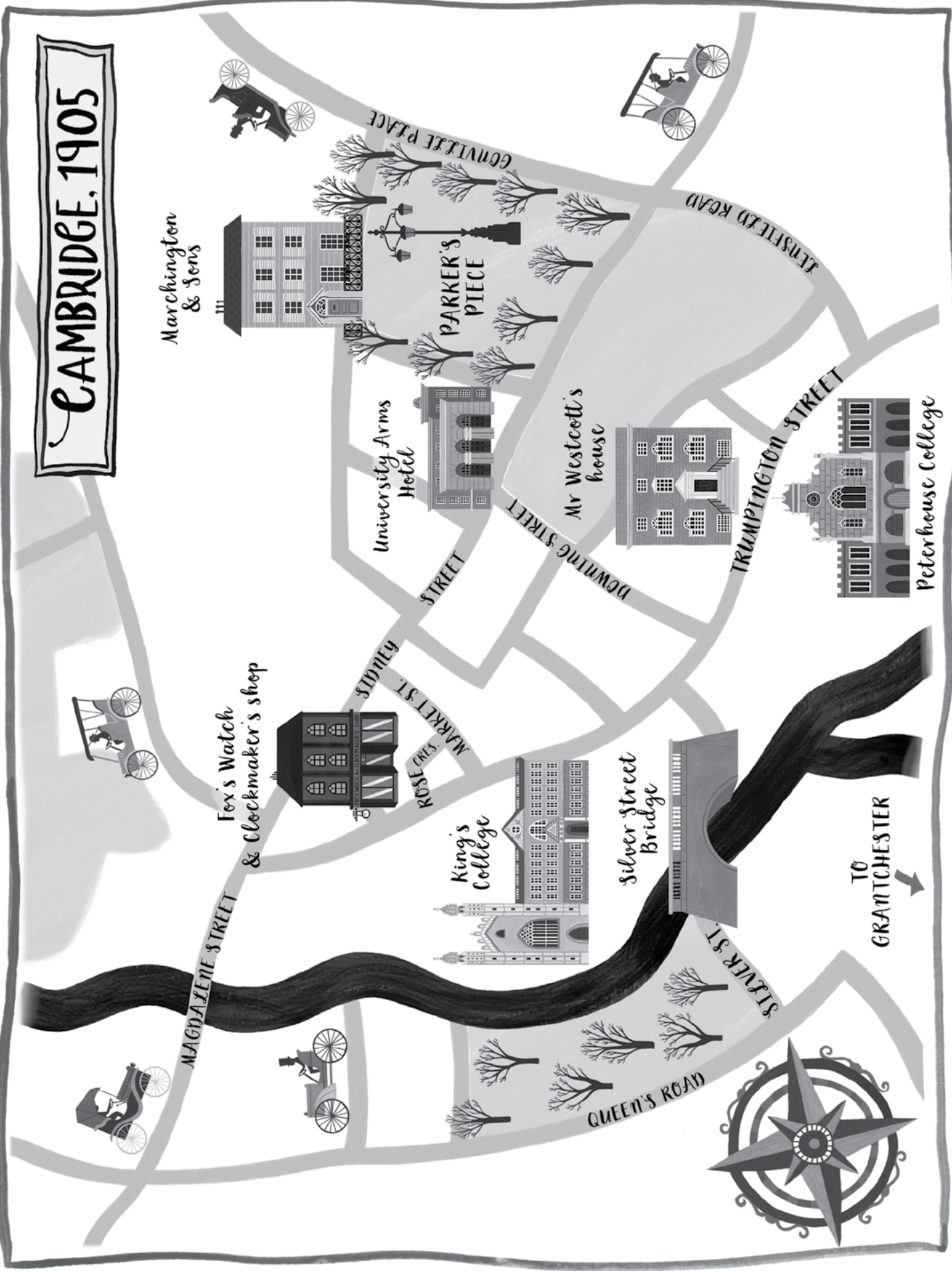
## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Can you remember the names of any famous clocks that the author includes in the story?
- What does Helena find 'eerie' and 'horrible' about the clocks in the extract?
- Do you think that Helena is jealous of the clocks in any way? Explain your ideas.
- Why is Helena's father so afraid of the clocks stopping? What about Mr Westcott?
- What do the words 'obsession' and 'superstition' mean? How do they link to the theme of clocks?

## ACTIVITY: WHAT STORIES CLOCKS COULD TELL

- On page 75, Helena asks: 'What stories could these watches tell if they could talk?' Discuss how the writer makes the clocks and watches of the story almost take on a life and personality of their own. You are going to use this idea for your own short story.
- Before you put pen to paper, close your eyes and try to visualise walking through Mr Westcott's house with all its ticking clocks within. Let your eyes scan over the different types of clocks and watches, from different people and places all over the world. Then, try to picture one clock or watch in particular. What does it look like? Where did it come from? Who was its previous owner? Make a few notes as these ideas come to you.
- Complete the plan for your story, using these questions to help you:
  - Does your story involve themes of **obsession**, **superstition** or **secrets**?
  - Is your clock or watch **famous** in any way?
  - How does the clock or watch seem to have a **life** or **personality** of its own?
  - Which other **characters** are in your story?
  - What **time period** and **setting** will you use for your story?
- Then, when you are happy with your plan, write a story that this clock or watch might 'tell if they could talk'.

# CAMBRIDGE, 1905



# EXTRACT 2: CAMBRIDGE IN THE EDWARDIAN ERA



## TAKEN FROM CHAPTER FOURTEEN – PEBBLES

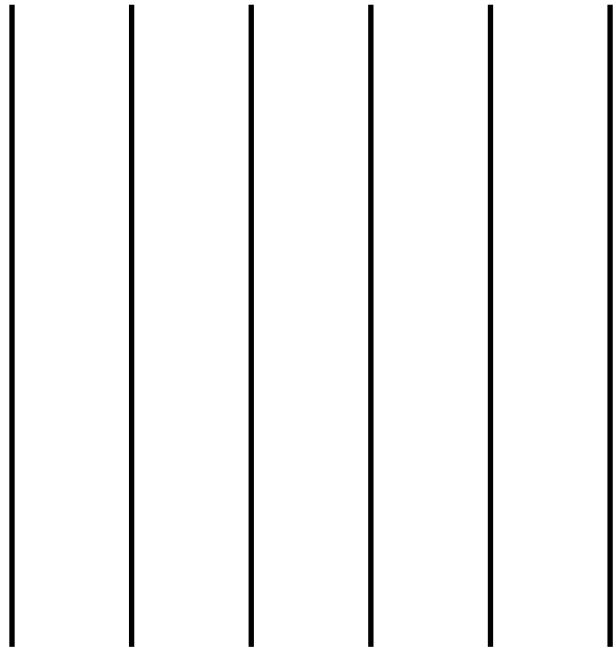
*Helena and her father occasionally walked past the workhouse close to where they lived in London. Her eyes would be drawn to the red-brick building, which reminded her of newspaper pictures she had seen of industrial mills in the north, tall and forbidding. Helena knew that to end up in a workhouse was something to be avoided at all costs. It was a last resort for the poor and homeless, even though it provided them with a roof to sleep under, regular meals and clothes. But in return people were expected to work long, tedious hours. They would hear the sounds of men in the yard, chopping wood, crushing stone – hard physical labour that would earn them just enough money to stay there. Tendrils of steam would rise from the open windows as women washed and scrubbed in the laundry. “Those people in there have fallen on hard times indeed,” her father would say sadly. “There must be nothing worse for a person’s self-esteem and health than ending up in the workhouse.”*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What do you learn about the workhouse in the extract?
- How does Helena’s fear of the workhouse link to Ralph and his family?
- What else have you learnt about the Edwardian era in Cambridge from the story? Eg. Education, Asylums
- Do you think life was easy in Edwardian England? Give examples.
- Why do you think the writer has chosen this time period for her story? Explain your ideas.

### ACTIVITY: A POSTCARD FROM CAMBRIDGE

- As a class, discuss, has anyone been to Cambridge? What is it like? How is it different or similar to how it is described in the story? Look over the map of Cambridge included at the beginning of the story. How does this help you visualise the world that Helena and the other characters inhabit?
- Choosing a landmark or place from the map that interests you, sketch a picture of Edwardian Cambridge onto your ‘Postcard Template’. Then, imagining that you are visiting Cambridge in 1905, write a few lines to a friend or family member telling them about your visit. You may wish to include:
  - The **places** you have visited and **people** you have met
  - Your overall **impressions** of Cambridge, E.G. Do you like it?
  - **Clocks, characters**, or any other **themes** from the text
  - An **older, more formal** style of English in your writing
- Share your postcards with the students on your table. How have you all captured Cambridge in the Edwardian era? Put your postcards up on display in your classroom!



# EXTRACT 3: INVENTIONS AND SOCIAL CHANGE



## TAKEN FROM CHAPTER SIXTEEN – BOOK MAZE

*“Just like my father’s work with automobiles, this subject, the designing of flying machines, is new and bold. Imagine the wings of a bird. The power and the potential. One day we may all be flying in the air to new places, like your beautiful parrot,” said Stanley wistfully.*

*“But...that...sounds impossible,” Helena said. “The Wright brothers have not flown more than two minutes in the air.”*

*“Impossible? Helena, nothing in this world is impossible!” said Stanley. “Imagine if all of the world’s greatest inventors had taken that view. Mr Austin and my father believe that one day the automobile will be commonplace and available to everyone. Why not flying machines too? It’s well known that small ideas turn impossibilities into possibilities.”*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Which pioneering inventions are mentioned in the extract?
- How would these inventions bring about social change in the Edwardian era? Explain your ideas.
- What does Stanley mean when he says, ‘small ideas turn impossibilities into possibilities’?
- What other inventions are referred to in the text? How would they have changed life in Edwardian England?
- Which do you think is the most impressive or important invention and why? Give examples.

## ACTIVITY: MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE, POSSIBLE

- To begin with, your teacher will split you into pairs and you will be designated one of the inventions from the book: an automobile, a flying machine, a chronometer, or a vacuum.
- In your pairs, your job is to create a 1905 advertisement for this invention. This will include a billboard poster design to go up in the centre of Cambridge, and a short Dragon’s Den style sales pitch that will be used to sell your product. Your aim is to make people aware of your product and to sell as many as possible. So, before you start drawing and writing you will need to do some research and thinking about:
  - What is your product? **What does it do?** How will it bring about **social change**?
  - Who is your **target market**? I.E. Who do you think would want to buy your product?
  - How much might your product cost in Edwardian times?
  - How might your product, ‘**turn impossibilities into possibilities**’?
  - How could you make your advertisement and pitch **stand out**?
- Work together to design your billboard poster and write your short sales pitch. Then, perform your pitch and share your advertisement on your tables or to the whole class. Students can vote on which they think is the best!

# EXTRACT 4: THE ROLE OF WOMEN



## TAKEN FROM CHAPTER 41 – TRUTH

*Mr Westcott stumbled to a chair near the fireplace and sank onto it, rubbing his cheeks. “Mother’s clock did not stop of its own accord?”*

*Katherine shook her head. “It was your job to wind Mother’s clock when we were children. I thought if I stopped it, you would get into trouble. You had everything, Edgar. The expensive boarding school. Conversations with Father about the printing firm. The month-long trips to the Americas. All the while I was left at home and ignored. We grew up in Cambridge. I would come into town with Nanny and see women going to university lectures, books clutched to their chests, their faces wide with possibilities. Do you remember, I broached the subject with you once – asked if I might apply to study there? You laughed; said I should push such ridiculous thoughts from my head.”*

*Mr Westcott pressed a hand to his mouth and shook his head, as if the words were chiming in his brain and would not settle.*

*“It was you then...who stopped the clocks again this time,” said Helena.*

*Katherine nodded.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Why did Katherine stop her, ‘Mother’s clock’? What did she hope to achieve?
- Do you feel any sympathy for Katherine in this extract? Explain why or why not.
- Which other girls or women in the story are frustrated and why? What ambitions might they have?
- How has the role of women changed since Edwardian times?
- Do you think men and women are now equal in society in every way? Discuss your ideas.

## ACTIVITY 1: FRUSTRATIONS AND AMBITIONS

- Over the course of the 20th century, opportunities for girls and women changed a great deal. Yet, with the story being set in 1905, many of the female characters are very frustrated by the laws and expectations placed upon them.
- As a class, discuss and make notes about issues such as education, work, marriage, the law, inheritance, and class in more detail. When possible, try to relate them to the following female characters and their experiences as well as ambitions: Helena, Katherine, Mrs Westcott, Boy/Florence, and Jane (a minor character mentioned on pages 48–49).
- Using these notes to help you, next to each speech bubble on the ‘Frustrations and Ambitions’ worksheet, write the name and draw one of the five female characters listed above. Inside their speech bubble, write a few words about why they might be frustrated at being a woman in 1905, as well as their ambitions for the future. Refer back to the text to help you!
- When you have completed all five speech bubbles, on your tables, take it in turns to role-play each of the characters’ thoughts and feelings. Ask each other about other characters and events from the story. This is your chance to add any final ideas or notes to your worksheet!



