

Noughts and Crosses

Malorie Blackman



About the author

Malorie Blackman was born in London in 1962. She wanted to become an English teacher but studied computer science instead. She worked in computers until she started writing when she was twenty-eight, and apart from books she also writes scripts for television programmes. She lists playing the piano and writing poems as her hobbies and she lives in Kent with her husband.

Summary

Chapters 1–2: Meggie McGregor and her employer, Mrs Hadley, are watching two children playing in the garden. Callum is Meggie's son and Sephy is Mrs Hadley's daughter. Mrs Hadley's husband, Kamal, arrives and hits his wife after discovering, with the innocent help of Meggie, she had lied to him. Later, Meggie is told that Mrs Hadley no longer wants her to work for her. When they are sitting on a beach Callum kisses Sephy and then begins to explain his worries about school. He has been admitted to Sephy's school, which is an elite school for people like Sephy who are from a social group called the Crosses. Callum is from an inferior group called the noughts. Sephy is sad that Callum feels inferior and that the two groups are not allowed to mix. Callum returns to his parent's small house and is asked where he has been. His older brother Jude says he has been with a Cross girl but Callum denies this. He looks at his sister, Lynette, and recalls the day three years previously when she had lost her mind following an accident. Three years ago too, Sephy's mother had changed and had become unhappy and started drinking. One night, Sephy hears her father refer to the noughts as 'blankers', a terrible name for them. He is talking to a man who has infiltrated a

group called the Freedom Fighters. He wants the man to discover the name of their leader because he is worried this group might destroy his plans to gain an important government position. She is surprised to see the man her father is talking to is a nought. Back in Callum's house, Callum's sister thinks she is a Cross because she believes she has dark skin, when in fact it is white like the rest of the family.

Chapters 3–4: When Sephy arrives at school she sees a crowd of Cross people shouting that they didn't want blankers in their school. She tries to calm the situation and inappropriately refers to the crowd as blankers. Later, she apologises to Callum for the use of the word but it has clearly hurt him more than she realised. He tells her to keep away from him at school for her own sake. When Callum returns home he sees a news story about the trouble at the school and sees Sephy saying the terrible word again on the TV. Also on the news is Sephy's father threatening the Freedom Fighters with death. He goes to bed thinking that perhaps it isn't a good idea to associate with Crosses. The next day, Sephy sits down to eat her lunch with Callum and some other noughts, but her teacher drags her back to her own table. The following day, Sephy is badly beaten up by some Cross girls and is confined to bed. Callum goes to visit her everyday but is turned away by Mrs Hadley's secretary. In Callum's house a fight breaks out between Jude and his sister Lynette because she insists she is a Cross. Callum's father breaks up the fight and explains the reasons for Lynette's behaviour. Three years previously, she and her Cross boyfriend, Jed, had been attacked by a group of nought men and the beating had seriously affected her brain.

Chapters 5–6: Sephy overhears an argument between her mother and father. He accuses her of being a drunk and of not having allowed his son (by another woman) into the family and she accuses him of having an affair. Later in the evening they find their mother unconscious after drinking an overdose of medicine. There are problems too in Callum's house. Lynette walks out after a fight with Jude. Three hours later two policemen arrive with the news that she has died in an accident with a bus. That night, Callum finds her suicide note in his bed. Several months later, Callum suspects his father and Jude are in someway linked to the Freedom Fighters. One day he arranges to see Sephy at a shopping centre but Jude forbids him to go there on that particular afternoon.

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He meets Sephy and under his insistence they leave the building just before a bomb explodes. Back home he learns that the bomb had killed seven people. Jude admits to his mother he had placed the bomb in the centre and she demands that he leaves the house. That night the police raid the house and arrest Callum, his mum and his dad, but not Jude because he isn't in the house. The police have found a drink can with Jude's fingerprints on it near the bomb site. Callum's dad confesses to the crime and says that Jude must have innocently left his fingerprints on the drink can when it was in the house. He tells his wife he did not place the bomb.

Chapters 7–8: An anonymous donor (who we learn later is Mrs Hadley) has agreed to pay for an expensive lawyer to defend Callum's dad. At his trial, Callum's dad pleads innocent but is found guilty. Two weeks later, Sephy is taken by her parents to witness the execution of Callum's father. However, just before the execution is due to be carried out, the prison governor stops it and declares that the sentence has been changed to life imprisonment. Callum's father is not pleased because he was prepared to die and doesn't want to remain in prison his whole life. Callum visits Sephy and informs her that her father had ordered the execution to be cancelled so that his father would have to stay in prison. They talk about the sad recent past and the problem between the Crosses and the noughts. The mood is ugly at first, until the two kiss each other. A few days later, Callum's father is killed while trying to escape from prison. While Callum is thinking about this in a café, his brother Jude approaches him and asks if he wants to join the Freedom Fighters. He trains with a gang of four others for three years and eventually Jude becomes his boss. One day he sends Sephy a note asking her to meet him at the beach. When she arrives at the beach she is kidnapped by Callum and his friends.

Chapters 9–11: The group keep Sephy in a secret place. Before they send a ransom demand, Callum films Sephy with a newspaper to prove they really have her. Andrew Dorn, one of the senior members of the Freedom Fighters, arrives to see Sephy and then tells the group that she must be killed. The group leave to pick up the ransom money and Callum and Sephy are left alone. They admit that they do still love each other and sleep together. Jude returns an angry man because one of the group has been captured, and when he sees the two together a fight breaks out. Sephy manages to run out of the house

and the group follow her. Callum allows her to escape, but just before she leaves she tells him she recognised Andrew Dorn as someone who works for her father. The group breaks up and Callum gets a job far from home. He hears a radio report saying that Sephy could be pregnant. He returns home to see her and is caught in her garden and put in prison. Sephy's father visits him and gives him a terrible choice. If he agrees to a prison sentence and not death, then Sephy will have an abortion. Her father gives Sephy the same choice. Both of them know they can't let their baby die. Callum goes to his death with the sound of Sephy's loving voice in his ears and his words of love to her on his lips. A baby girl is born and named Callie Rose McGregor.

Background and themes

Racial discrimination: This is the central theme of the book. Because the noughts have different coloured skin they are economically disadvantaged, their schools are inferior, and the only interaction they can have with the Crosses is in the role of servants such as Mrs McGregor, and certainly not a romantic affair such as Callum and Sephy have.

Rebellion: Some sections of the nought community are not prepared to accept their disadvantaged situation and fight back with bombs and kidnapping. Callum is in the unfortunate situation of being in love with a person he is supposed to be at war with.

Discussion activities

Chapters 1–2

While reading (p. 4, after 'Sephy, do you ever dream about ... escaping?')

- Discuss:** Put the students in small groups and ask them to discuss the following questions about dreams: *Do you often have dreams? Do you have the same dream many times? Do you tell anybody about your dreams? Do you sometimes have bad dreams? What is the strangest dream you have ever had? Do you think dreams can tell us anything about the future?*

After reading

- Write and guess:** Put students in pairs and ask them to choose a short paragraph from Chapters 1–2. Tell them to write it again, making five changes to words in the text. Students then read out their paragraphs to the other students who have to identify the mistakes.

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Chapters 3–4

Before reading

3 Discuss: Put the students in pairs and ask them to talk about their first day at secondary school. Tell them to consider the following questions: *Were you nervous/excited/frightened when you arrived? Did your parents take you to school? Did you make friends with anybody? Did you have a fight? Did you like/hate any of the teachers?*

While reading (p. 13, after 'It was the end of another bad day at school.')

4 Role play: Put the students in groups of three and tell them they are going to act out a conversation between Sephy, Callum and the headmaster at the end of the school day. The headmaster asks questions about what has happened and Callum and Sephy give their accounts.

After reading

5 Write: Ask the students to write a summary of Chapters 3–4. Tell them the summary must be exactly 50 words long, not one more or less. They then read out their stories to the rest of the class who vote for the best summary.

Chapters 5–6

While reading (p. 24, after 'On the TV there were pictures of people on the ground, broken windows, blood.')

6 Write and role play: Put the students in pairs and tell them they are going to be two television news reporters at the bomb scene. Tell them to write a news presentation based on what they know and to invent more information. Tell them to make the presentation as lively as possible. See Discussion activities key.

After reading

7 Game: Write the word *person* on the board. Then write the word *unkind* in front of it. Tell the students that there are approximately 30 words in Chapter 5 that can be written before the word *person* to describe a person's feelings, character or physical appearance. In pairs tell them they have 10 minutes to find as many of these words as possible. The pair with the most words wins.

Chapters 7–8

While reading (p. 30, after 'But there will be no hanging today.')

8 Discuss: Tell the students that some countries have the death penalty for serious crimes and some do not. Then ask them to discuss the following questions: *Which countries execute criminals? Are people who are guilty of serious crimes executed in your country? What are the serious crimes? Do you agree with executions? Do they stop people doing crimes?*

9 Write and guess: On the board, write *Sephy didn't have Callum's number*. Elicit which word is wrong from the students (address not number). Now students choose a sentence from Chapters 7–8 and rewrite it changing one word. Students walk around the classroom, reading out their sentences and the other students have to identify and correct the mistake.

Chapters 9–11

Before reading

10 Predict and quiz: Put the students in pairs and read out the following questions: *The group send a letter to/telephone/meet Sephy's father? Callum cuts off Sephy's hair/finger/ear. A policeman/Callum/Jude helps Sephy to escape. Sephy's dad wants to kill/look after/hide Sephy's baby. Callum marries Sephy/is executed/returns to his family. Sephy's baby is a boy/a girl/dead. After you finish the book check the student's answers and the pair with the most correct answers wins.*

While reading (p. 45, after 'No, you're not,' Dad said.)

11 Role play: Put the students in pairs and tell them they are going to act out a conversation between Sephy and her dad. Tell them to be very argumentative and to make threats of what they will do if the other person doesn't agree to their demands.

After reading

12 Pair work: Write the following words on the board: *newspaper, government, midnight, hotel, birthday, grandfather, spy, cloth*. Ask the students talk and write in pairs to say how these words were used in Chapters 9–11.

13 Write and ask: On the board, write *Who hit Sephy across the face?* Elicit the answer (Jude). Ask students to write another question about something in Chapters 9–11. Now have students stand up and walk around the classroom, asking and answering each other's questions.

14 Discuss: Remind the students that the book is about two groups of people who can't live together, in this case because of the colour of their skin. Then put them into small groups to discuss the following questions: *What can we do so people of different coloured skin can live together? Do you think there are the same problems with people of different religions or people from different nations or people that are poor and people that are rich? Can the government make laws to stop this problem happening? Do you have any friends that are not from your country?*

15 Research: Ask the students to look on the Internet for reviews of the book and to find one bad review and one good one. Then the students read out their reviews to the rest of the class.

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While reading

Chapters 1–2

1 Are the sentences right (✓) or wrong (X)?

- a Mrs Hadley's husband visited his wife often.
- b Meggie has worked for Mrs Hadley for fourteen years.
- c Sephy has kissed a lot of boys before she kissed Callum.
- d Sephy wanted to start doing the school work.
- e Sephy's mother didn't want her to meet Callum.
- f There were three other nought students at the school with Callum.
- g Lynette had the mind of a child because she didn't go to school.

2 Write the name of the person who says or thinks this.

Callum's mum Callum's dad Lynette
Callum Sephy's father Sephy Jude

- a 'It's OK. You can work for another person.'
- b 'I want to live in a bigger, more expensive house.'
- c 'I am going to be an important man in the government.'
- d 'Why is a nought talking to my father?'
- e 'Don't make any trouble with the students in the school.'
- f 'My brother and crazy sister think they are Crosses.'
- g 'I don't know who or where I am.'

Chapters 3–4

3 What's first? Number the sentences 1–6.

- a Sephy sits down to lunch with the nought students.
- b Callum's dad tells the story about Lynette and Jed.
- c Callum tries to get into Sephy's house.
- d A nought girl is hurt outside the school.
- e Jude and his sister have a fight about Crosses.
- f Some of the Cross students attack Sephy in the toilets.

4 Underline the wrong word and put the right one.

- a Sephy's brother was shouting at the blankers.
- b There was blood on the girl's legs.
- c Callum's mum was Minerva's teacher when she was young.
- d Shania, the nought girl, had a pink plaster on her face.
- e Shania was sad that Sephy was attacked.
- f Callum put his body between the door and the wall of Sephy's house.
- g Lynette was in hospital for more than two months.

Chapters 5–6

5 Find the right words in Chapters 5–6.

- a Something that isn't true. (p. 17)
- b These come out of your eyes when you are crying. (p. 17)
- c It has an address and phone number on it and you give it to people. (p. 19)
- d People put a letter in this before they post it. (p. 19)
- e A part of your body at the top of your arm. (p. 20)
- f It means the same as afraid. (p. 23)
- g A loud sound people make when they are afraid or angry. (p. ??)

6 Put a word or words on the left with a word or words on the right.

- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| agree | a TV |
| start | somebody |
| spend | a door |
| knock at | to something |
| step | time |
| miss | again |
| shake | your head |
| switch on | forward |

7 Put the words in the right place to make a sentence.

- a sister in tears Sephy's had eyes her
.....
- b bad the some police had news officers
.....

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- c pocket Callum's put in dad something his
- d wanted Sephy to death Callum about tell the
- e very was the face news serious reporter's
- f bomb Jude friends placed and the his
- g cell the doors very police heavy had

Chapters 7–8

8 Answer the questions.

- a Who were Callum and his mother staying with?
- b What colour dress did Sephy wear to the execution?
- c What time did Sephy and her family arrive at the prison?
- d What did Callum throw at Sephy's window?
- e How old was Callum when he became an officer?
- f Who in the group always carried knives?
- g What did Sephy want to be when she was older?

9 Circle the wrong word in the sentences.

- a Callum watched the trial in on the television news.
- b Callum's mum didn't want to accepting accept the money.
- c Sephy's dress cost more that than one thousand pounds.
- d Sephy was frightened frightening by the look on Callum's face.
- e Callum couldn't see seen Sephy in the crowd.
- f Callum went to the beach a little few times after his dad died.
- g Somebody hit Sephy hard hardly in the stomach.

10 Put the underlined letters in the right place to make a word.

- a Callum's mum didn't want to accept a cheque from a ntesargr
- b Callum's father ordered the oegnorvr to stop the execution.
- c Jude looked oyevulrns around the café before he spoke.
- d Callum joined the Freedom Fighters and became a drolesi
- e Sephy hated her house because there were too many rsmimoe
- f Callum left a sgesmae in an envelope for Sephy.
- g Sephy walked into the ntmolio water.

Chapters 9–11

11 Circle the right word or words.

- a Sephy threw a piece of *her hair / paper* on the floor.
- b Callum cut Sephy's *arm / finger* with the knife.
- c Andrew Dorn had long hair and *expensive / dark* clothes.
- d Sephy started to run towards the *beach / woods*.
- e Andrew Dorn wanted Callum to *kill / help* Sephy.
- f Callum worked in a *garage / shop* after the kidnap.
- g Jack was *pleased / sad* that Callum was going to die.

12 Finish the sentences with the right words.

- stay prove send covered pulled placed
- a The Freedom Fighters needed to that Sephy was their prisoner.
 - b Callum Sephy's T-shirt with blood.
 - c Callum his fingers on Sephy's mouth.
 - d Sephy sat up in bed and on her clothes.
 - e Jude wanted his brother to away from Sephy.
 - f Sephy's parents wanted to her to a private hospital.

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1 What's first? Number the sentences 1–10.

- a A bomb in the shopping centre kills seven people.
- b Callum starts going to the Cross's school.
- c One of the Freedom Fighters is killed by the police.
- d Sephy's baby is born.
- e The Freedom Fighters kidnap Sephy.
- f Sephy's father talks to Callum in prison about the baby.
- g Callum's sister is killed by a bus.
- h Meggie loses her job at the house of Mrs Hadley.
- i Sephy's mother pays for an expensive lawyer for Callum's father.
- j Callum sees Sephy on TV shouting the word 'blankers'.

2 Finish the sentences with the right names.

Callum Jack Mrs Hadley Callum's dad Jude
Kamal Hadley Callie Rose Lynette Sephy
Sarah Pike

- a has a lover and drinks a lot of wine.
- b has an important job in the government.
- c worked as a secretary.
- d was killed by a bus.
- e saw her mother lying on the floor with a medicine bottle near her.
- f found a note from his sister in his bed.
- g left a drink tin in the shopping centre.
- h preferred to die than stay in prison.
- i was a kind Cross guard in the prison
- j was born after her father died.

3 Answer these questions.

- a Where did Meggie see Callum and Sephy playing?
.....
- b Where was Sephy's favourite place in the world?
.....
- c Where did a crowd of people shout at the noughts?
.....
- d Where did Callum see a lot of smoke and hear people screaming?
.....
- e Where did Callum's father sign a confession?
.....
- f Where did Jude ask Callum to join the Freedom Fighters?
.....

- g Where did Sephy's mum send her away to for two and half years?
.....
- h Where did Sephy see Andrew Dorn for the second time?
.....
- i Where did Callum hear that Sephy might be pregnant?
.....
- j Where did Sephy's father want her to go to kill the baby?
.....

4 Finish the sentences with the right word.

son hair group fights house child table
garden word lawyer

- a Callum and his brother Jude had a lot of
.....
- b Lynette was a woman but she had the mind of a
.....
- c Callum was angry that Sephy used a terrible
.....
- d The girls attacked Sephy because she sat at a nought's
- e Sephy didn't know that her father had a
.....
- f A group of people burned and destroyed Callum's
.....
- g Mrs Hadley wanted to pay for an expensive
.....
- h Callum used a sharp knife to cut off some of Sephy's
- i The police caught Callum in Sephy's
- j The Freedom Fighters knew they had an enemy in the

5 Are these sentences right (✓) or wrong (X)?

- a Mr and Mrs McGregor had two children.
- b Mrs Hadley employed Callum's mum again.
- c Sephy wanted Callum to be in her class.
- d Callum lied to his parents about his first day at school.
- e Lynette's boyfriend was a nought.
- f Sephy's mother was hurt in the shopping centre.
- g Callum's mum didn't know anything about the bomb.
- h Sephy ran away from the kidnappers.
- i Jude cut Sephy with a knife.
- j Sephy spoke to Callum just before he died.

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Book key

- 1 a kidnapped b cell c fingerprints d lawyer
e guilty f confession g trial h freedom
- 2 a Open answers
b If both players play well, nobody will win. Both of them will lose. This happens in the story too.
- 3 a Meggie McGregor
b Ryan McGregor
c Jude McGregor
d Lynette McGregor
e Jasmine Hadley
f Kamal Hadley
g Minerva Hadley
- 4 a He hits her because she has lied to him.
b The family need the money from her job for Jude's education.
c Callum is older.
d Sephy's family has more money.
e The Crosses control the country.
f The noughts are not important but the Crosses are. The small *n* shows this.
g Lynette is a young woman but she has the mind of a child.
- 5–6 Open answers
- 7 a ✗ b ✓ c ✓ d ✗ e ✓ f ✗ g ✓ h ✓
i ✓ j ✗
- 8 Possible answers:
a When Sephy arrives at school, she sees a crowd of angry adults and Heathcroft pupils.
b Callum is angry with Sephy because she uses the word *blankers*.
c If Callum talks to Sephy at school, she will lose her friends.
d When Callum hears about the attack on Sephy, he goes to her house.
e When Jude hits Callum, their father stops the fight.
f Three men attacked Lynette because her boyfriend was a Cross.
- 9–10 Open answers
- 11 a Mrs Hadley b Callum c Jude
d a shopping centre e seven f Mr McGregor
- 12 a Jasmine Hadley is speaking to Kamal Hadley about his son. The child was born to another woman before their marriage.
b Minerva (Minnie) is talking to Sephy about their mother, and the reasons for her unhappiness.
c Mrs McGregor is talking to her husband, Ryan. She is angry that he didn't stop Jude and Lynette fighting.
d Officer Collins, a police officer, is telling the McGregor family about Lynette's death.
e Jude is talking to Sephy after Lynette's death.
f Sephy is talking to Callum about the bomb in the shopping centre.
g Mrs McGregor is talking to Jude about the bomb attack on the shopping centre.
h Mr McGregor is talking to his wife and Callum about his confession.
- 13–14 Open answers
- 15 a 1 b 7 c 8 d 3 e 4 f 5 g 2 h 6
- 16 a noughts b angry c Jasmine d four e lawyer
f message g the beach
- 17–18 Open answers
- 19 a 10 b 8 c 9 d 4 e 6 f 1 g 7 h 5
i 3 j 2
- 20 Possible answers:
a Cross skin is brown and all plasters are brown too. This shows how unimportant the noughts are. There are no pink plasters for the noughts' pale skin.
b The police found Jude's fingerprints on a drinks can at the Dundale Shopping Centre. They found the same fingerprints on part of the bomb. This suggests that he placed the bomb there.
c Sephy notices Andrew Dorn's shoes when he visits her father at the Hadley family home. She sees them again when Dorn visits the Freedom Fighters. She realises that he is a government spy. She tells Callum, and he tells Jude.
d Meggie McGregor's grandfather was a Cross. Jude hates the Crosses but he has Cross blood.
e Sephy names her baby Callie Rose McGregor. This tells everyone that the baby's father was Callum.
- 21–32 Open answers

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Discussion activities key

1–3 Open answers

4 Headmaster: Can you tell me what happened in school today?

Callum: A girl was hurt because a Cross student threw a stone at her.

H: How do you know it was a Cross student?

C: Because they hate the noughts.

H: And you Sephy?

Sephy: I was in the toilet and ...

5 Open answers

6 Reporter A: We are here outside the shopping centre and it is a terrible place today.

Reporter B: Yes, there are hurt people on the ground, old people, young children and some people are not moving.

Reporter A: I can see into the café and there are ...

7 good, unpleasant, excellent, great, hurt, stupid, boring, older, crazy, important, unhappy, strange, nice, lonely, angry, sad, weak, tall, thin, short, fat, bad, dead, small, tired, strong, dark, quiet, unfriendly, surprised, frightened.

8–9 Open answers

10 A letter. Hair. Callum. To kill. Is executed. A girl

11 Sephy: Listen to me! I want this baby and I'm going to have this baby!

Dad: If you have this baby you will leave my house and I won't give you any money.

S: I don't want your money. I want to be with the father of my baby, Callum.

Dad: You are going to the hospital now and ...

12 Callum filmed Sephy with a newspaper./Callum was reading a newspaper in his cell. Kamal Hadley was leaving the government. It was almost midnight when Sephy escaped. Jude, Morgan and Callum were hiding in a dirty, little hotel. The group will meet again on Callum's birthday. Callum and Jude's grandfather was a Cross. The Freedom Fighters were looking for an enemy spy. Jack pulled a cloth over Callum's head.

13–15 Open answers

Activity worksheets key

1 a X b ✓ c X d X e ✓ f ✓ g X

2 a Callum's dad

b Callum

c Sephy's father

d Sephy

e Callum's mum

f Jude

g Lynette

3 a 2 b 6 c 4 d 1 e 5 f 3

4 a brother > sister

b legs > face

c teacher > nurse

d pink > brown

e sad > excited/pleased

f body > foot

g months > weeks

5 a lie b tears c card d envelope e shoulder

f frightened g scream

6 agree – to something

start – again

spend – time

knock at – a door

step – forward

miss – somebody

shake – your head

switch on – a TV

7 a Sephy's sister had tears in her eyes.

b The police officers had some bad news.

c Callum's dad put something in his pocket.

d Callum wanted to tell Sephy about the death.

e The news reporter's face was very serious.

f Jude and his friends placed the bomb.

g The police cell had very heavy doors.

8 a Relatives.

b Blue.

c Just before six o'clock.

d Small stones.

e Nineteen.

f Four.

g A lawyer.

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9 a in b accepting c that d frightening e seen
f little g hardly

10 a stranger b governor c nervously d soldier
e memories f message g moonlit

11 a paper b finger c expensive d woods e kill
f garage g sad

12 a prove b covered c placed d pulled e stay
f send

Progress test key

1 a 5 b 2 c 8 d 10 e 7 f 9 g 4 h 1
i 6 j 3

2 a Mrs Hadley b Kamal Hadley c Sarah Pike
d Lynette e Sephy f Callum g Jude
h Callum's dad i Jack j Callie Rose

3 a In Mrs Hadley's garden.

b Her parent's private beach.

c Outside Heathcroft school.

d In the shopping centre.

e In the police station.

f In a café.

g To a school

h In the prison cell in the house in the woods.

i On the radio, in a garage.

j To the hospital.

4 a fights b child c word d table e son

f house g lawyer h hair i garden j group

5 a X b X c ✓ d ✓ e X f X g ✓ h ✓

i X j ✓