

Chapter Two

To think about while reading:



1

What did Jacob have with him?

2

Where are the group heading?

3

What does Mister Penniket do?



Chapter Two

By the time they were heading out of the door, the rain had eased to a misty drizzle. Jacob had stuffed some useful supplies into his rucksack, as usual. He had his hand lens, his binoculars and a miniature hammer, among other tools. He never went to the beach – or anywhere, in fact – without his bag.

Faizal shook out the wet raincoat that he'd arrived in earlier. He had reluctantly borrowed wellies from Jacob, taking off his white trainers and placing them neatly next to each other in the hall. Pulling on the boots, he tucked in his expensive tracksuit bottoms, complaining that they had better not get dirty. "It's gonna be muddy, you know," he had warned them several times.

With everyone decked out in coats and hats, they headed down the road to the main part of the village. From there, they could take the cliff steps down onto the beach. It was fairly quiet at this time of the year;

seaside visitors were few and far between during the winter months. The whole place was a different sight compared with the hustle and bustle when the summer tourists arrived again.

They reached the crumbling Jurassic Coastal Museum, which looked as old as some of the exhibits inside it. Jacob loved learning about the displays it housed but, for some reason, he always found the place creepy-looking. Maybe it was something about the stained, old stone, or maybe the dark green moss that spread from every crack. It just did not seem welcoming.

Nakeisha was the first to spot Sam outside. He was in their class at school.

Sam was sitting on a bench outside the museum kicking the toe of his dirty old boots into the ground. He jumped up hopefully when he saw the others and pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose.

"Hey, where are you guys going?" he asked, peering out from under a long, messy fringe of hair.

"Nowhere," said Faizal and Gabi at exactly the same time. "Jinx!" They both looked at each other and giggled.

Sam bowed his head.

“Just down to the beach –” Jacob began.

“You’ve probably got stuff to do and we’re in a hurry,” Faizal butted in.

“Yeah, come on, before it rains again,” Gabi agreed and tugged on Nakeisha’s arm as she followed Faizal’s lead.

Nakeisha tagged along but looked back at Sam, pulling an apologetic face. Sam dug his hands into the pockets of his scruffy-looking jeans, then sat back down. Jacob saw him watching their group disappear through the community gardens and around the corner towards the steep cliff steps.

“Why don’t you like him?” Nakeisha asked when they were out of earshot.

“Well, one – he’s such a loner; two – he pokes his nose in...” Faizal began, counting out the points on his fingers for added effect.

“...and three – he’s just weird,” added Gabi. “He’s always hanging around the museum... or sneaking up

Phyllis and the Fossil Finders

on people... or lurking near those fossil-hunting tourist tours that old Mister Penniket runs..."

"Oh, yeah. That guy creeps me out, too. I heard that he keeps dead animals in his flat above the museum," Faizal said, adding a mock shiver.

"Exactly. I heard that he kills them and wears their skins. Why would anyone want to hang around near him?" Gabi said.

Jacob adjusted his shoulders uncomfortably under his rucksack. Admittedly, it annoyed him that Mister Penniket brought summer tourist groups trampling over the beach and taking the fossils that they knew nothing about. He thought about Faizal and Gabi's words but didn't reply. Nakeisha caught his eye and shrugged.

Chapter Two

After reading the chapter:

1 What was Sam doing when the group spotted him?

2 What do you think of the group's attitude towards Sam?

3 Why is Jacob annoyed?

4 What type of face did Nakeisha pull?

5 Who does not like Faizal?

