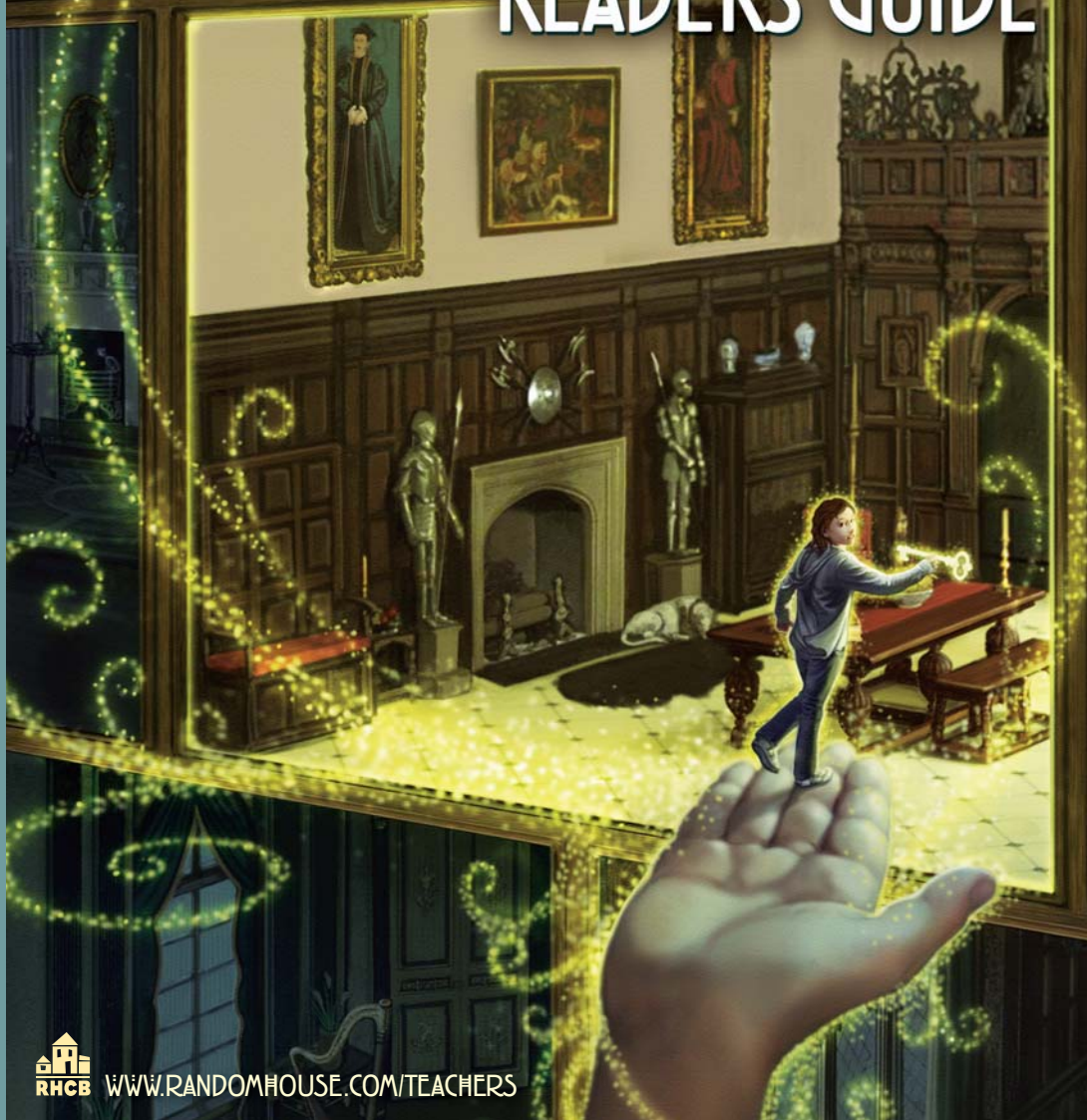


UNLOCK THE MAGIC OF THE THORNE ROOMS. . . .

THE SIXTY-EIGHT ROOMS

READERS GUIDE



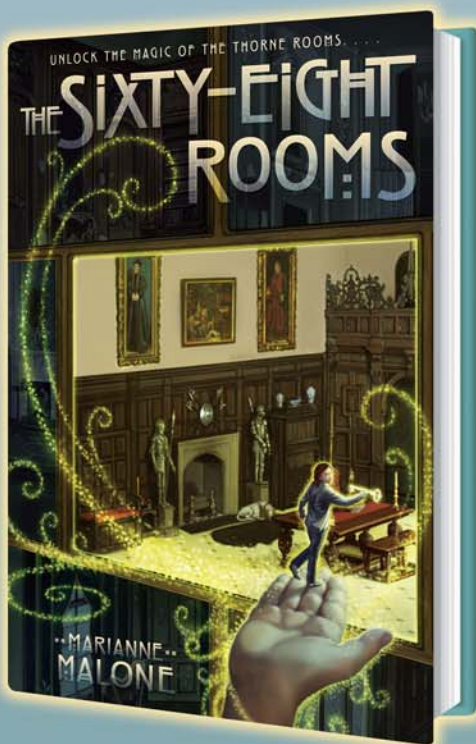
ABOUT THE BOOK



Grades 3–7

HC: 978-0-375-85710-2

GLB: 978-0-375-95710-9



**WHAT SECRETS WILL BE UNLOCKED—
AND LIVES CHANGED—WITH ONE MAGICAL KEY?**

RUTHIE AND JACK are in the sixth grade at Oakton School in Chicago when they go on a field trip to the Art Institute and discover the Thorne Rooms—sixty-eight miniature rooms from different historical periods. Jack finds an ornate key that is etched with “CM” and wonders what mystery it unlocks. Ruthie feels that the miniature rooms are magical, and wants to return and spend more time studying each room. When the key allows Ruthie to shrink, she explores the rooms from a different point of view. Then, she figures a way to make Jack shrink too. Together they move through history and explore the secrets of each room. When they discover a pink plastic barrette, they realize that they aren’t the only kids who have experienced the magic of the rooms. Who has been there before them? What mystery do they have to solve? And how does this discovery change someone’s life?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- Describe Ruthie and Jack's friendship. Ruthie's mother says that they are like "complementary colors on the color wheel." (p. 4) What color is Ruthie? What color is Jack? How do they complement one another? What makes Ruthie and Jack different from their classmates? Both Ruthie and Jack are gifted students. Explain the difference in their gifts. What does each of them contribute to their adventure in the Thorne Rooms?
- Jack's mother is a struggling artist who worries if there will be enough money to pay the rent. Jack frets about the possibility of having to move, but his mother tries to ease his concerns by saying, "Something will happen." (p. 25) How does this statement foreshadow the life-changing adventure that develops for Jack and Ruthie? Discuss how this statement foreshadows changes for Jack's mother, Mr. Bell, Caroline Bell, and Mrs. McVittie.
- Contrast Ruthie and Jack's families. Discuss why Ruthie's father has so much admiration for Jack's mother. How does Ruthie's father promote intellectual curiosity in his daughters? Why does this make it difficult for Ruthie to keep her adventure in the Thorne Rooms from her father?
- Ruthie and Jack are intrigued by the Thorne Rooms. They study the portrait of Mrs. Narcissa Thorne who donated the miniature rooms and note that she is poised and formal looking. What questions might Ruthie and Jack ask Mrs. Thorne if they could meet her on one of their trips back in time? How might Jack's questions differ from Ruthie's? What might Mrs. McVittie and Caroline Bell ask Mrs. Thorne?
- Debate Jack's reasoning: "I guess I don't feel like I'm doing something bad. It's not stealing; we're not hurting anyone or breaking anything." (p. 33) Is Ruthie right to suggest that they might be trespassing? How might Jack justify taking the key from Mr. Bell's pocket?
- Discuss Mrs. McVittie's idea of magic. At what point does she suspect that Ruthie has discovered the magic of the Thorne Rooms? Explain what Mrs. McVittie means when she says, "I do think believing and wanting are necessary elements of the magic." (p. 238)
- Discuss how curiosity overtakes fear for Ruthie and Jack as their adventure in the Thorne Rooms unfolds. At what point does their curiosity put them in potential danger?
- Explain how being a part of history helps Ruthie and Jack better understand history.
- Mrs. McVittie tells Ruthie, "We have to keep reconnecting the right people to the right things." (p. 266) Discuss the people and things that are reconnected as a result of Ruthie and Jack's magical adventure in the Thorne Rooms.
- Ruthie and Jack are assigned further research on the Thorne Rooms for extra credit. How does their experience in the Thorne Rooms change their view of research? What does their research reveal about Mrs. Thorne?
- Mrs. McVittie finds magic in old books. Discuss whether Caroline Bell was looking for magic or running away from it when she chose the field of medicine. Based on Ruthie and Jack's intellectual curiosity and their belief in magic, make a career prediction for each of them.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Visiting the Thorne Rooms at the Art Institute of Chicago was a big part of Marianne Malone's childhood. In addition to being an author and an artist, Marianne is the cofounder of the Campus Middle School for Girls in Urbana, Illinois. She and her husband divide their time between Urbana and Washington, D.C. This is her first novel.

Learn more about Marianne at MarianneMalone.com

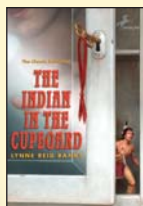
INTERNET RESOURCES

A virtual link to the actual Thorne Rooms at the Art Institute of Chicago:
www.artic.edu/aic/collections/search/citi/category:15

The official site for the International Guild of Miniature Artisans:
www.igma.org

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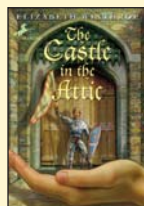
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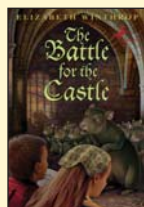
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