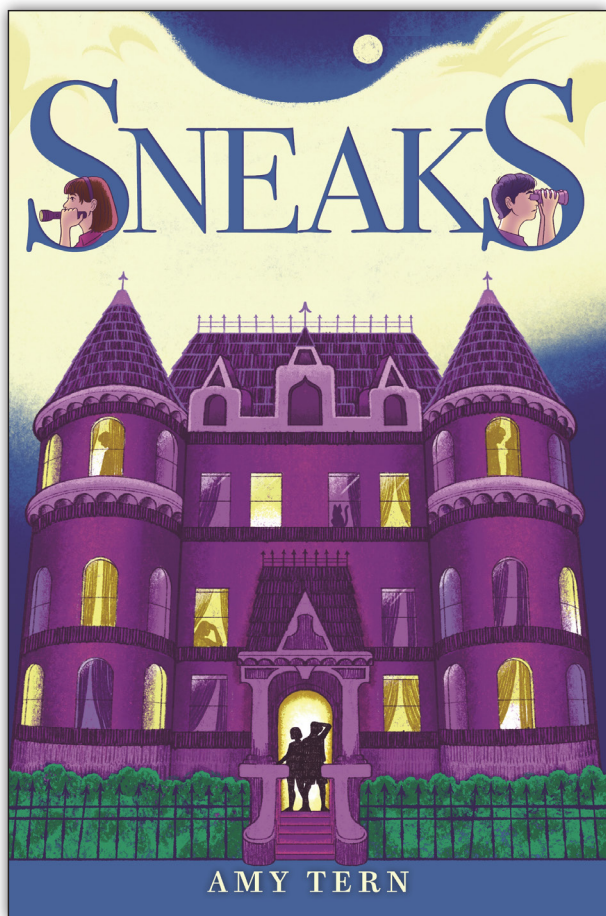


# HOLIDAY HOUSE BOOK CLUB GUIDE



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## *Sneaks*

by Amy Tern

★“A cracking adventure that also gently examines what it takes to be brave.”

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

### ABOUT THE BOOK

A missing child and an apartment that should be empty spur two tweens to solve an increasingly tangled neighborhood mystery in this page-turning middle grade debut.

Valory has developed an unfortunate reputation as a thief—primarily because she steals things—though she has resolved to change her ways.

Rook is a total asparagus-eater (a.k.a. a good kid), but he likes to spy on his neighbors. Nobody’s perfect, right?

The twelve-year-olds form an unlikely alliance when they encounter suspicious behavior in an “empty” apartment across the alley from Rook’s house. While agoraphobia keeps home-schooled Rook trapped on his property, confident and street-smart Valory can roam the scene undetected. Their opposite personalities might, in fact, be key to their success.

But their amateur detective mission morphs into something more sinister when they realize the apartment next door could be connected to a recent kidnapping. When the sleuths realize they’re also being watched, the pressure is on to unmask the villain. . . before she snatches them, too.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Valory and Rook, the two main characters, are introduced in chapters one and two. What are your first impressions of them? What are their first impressions of one another?
- Contrast their lives. Discuss why Valory calls Rook an “asparagus-eater” (p. 12). Debate whether this is an insult or a description. How does Rook react to this label?
- Sarcasm is the use of words that mean the opposite of what a person really wants to say. It is often witty and cutting. Valory is accused of sarcasm. Point out her use of sarcasm throughout the book. How does this help define her character?
- Valory’s mother gave her a Cinderella watch when she was ten. Explain the following: “She wore it ironically” (p. 30).
- Define prodigy. Explain why Rook is called a piano prodigy. How has piano consumed his life? Explain the following quote: “When he was little he had escaped into music. Now instead he was trying to escape from it” (p. 5). Point out the first hint that music may be more about his parents than about him.
- Describe Valory’s relationship with Tiff. How does Valory make Tiff feel stronger and brave? What causes Valory and Tiff to drift apart? Explain why Valory is so angry when she sees Tiff again.
- In what way does Valory make Rook feel brave? She says there are “two rules of bravery: (1) Fake it till you make it...(2) Don’t turn back” (p. 93). How do these rules fit Valory’s actions? At what point does Rook learn to use these rules? Discuss the third rule of bravery that Valory and Rook make by the end of the book.
- Kleptomania is an urge to steal. Debate whether Valory is a Kleptomaniac. Valory says, “Tiff and I—we never kept anything we took. Stealing was never the point” (p. 74). What was the point? Explain why stealing a coin from Mrs. Sagara’s coin collection is extremely risky. Discuss what Valory means when she tells Rook that taking the coin isn’t “real stealing” (p. 12). Why does Rook lie for her?
- Describe Ms. Smith. Why do Valory and Rook call her “Goblin Woman” (p. 55)? What does Rook’s mother mean when she says Ms. Smith is “eccentric” (p. 117)? Point out the behaviors that make Ms. Smith “eccentric.”
- Why are Valory and Rook intrigued with Ms. Smith? Explain why they are so convinced that the child in Ms. Smith’s apartment is the kidnapped girl, Lottie Sullivan. What are their thoughts when the real Lottie Sullivan is found?
- What is the role of the doll in the story? How do Valory and Rook use the doll to help them solve the mystery of Ms. Smith and her daughter? Discuss other clues to the mystery.
- Valory’s mother says early in the book, “Love is not a cage” (p. 55). In what way are Rook and Elizabeth caged? How are they set free? How do Valory, Rook, and Elizabeth change one another?
- Discuss the meaning of the title.

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Amy Tern** writes fast-paced and suspenseful mystery novels for kids. She lives in Virginia with her husband, two book-loving sons, and a petulant gecko.