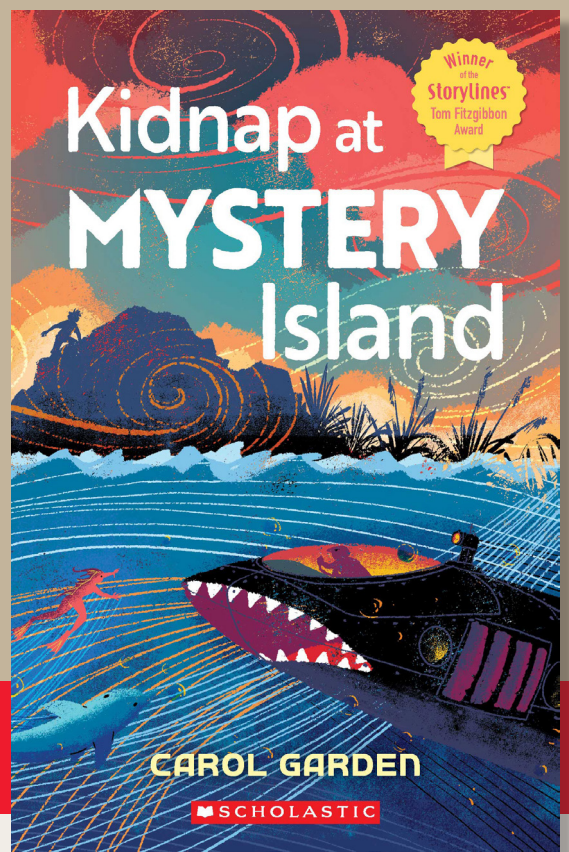


# Kidnap at Mystery Island

By Carol Garden

- Reading • Writing • Thinking Skills
- Social Studies



## Synopsis

Set in a time after the great global Environment Revolution of 2072, readers enter a high-tech world of eco criminals, artificial islands, global warming, rising seas and patrolling coastal rangers. All countries have strict laws that outlaw mining, fracking, or plundering of the seas. Climate change has been halted and humans are required to live in harmony with nature.

Dezi Krate is an Anti-Ec mining billionaire set on ignoring the new planet-saving laws because he wants to mine the sea floor in the Mercury Bay area for precious minerals to sell on the black market. Dezi lives with a few staff and his teenage son, Dom, on Mystery Island, a fake island that moves around the coastal areas of New Zealand. All kids in the New World have special talents and multicultural genes, and Dom's special talent, chosen by his parents at conception, is that he is a human chameleon – he can blend into any surroundings and become almost invisible. When Dom finds out that Dezi has kidnapped 10-year-old Zoe, the young niece of some coastal rangers, he is determined to sabotage his father's plans.

Zoe is a mind-reader. Her older sisters Mia (mechanical genius) and Annie (who can breathe underwater and talk to marine life) help launch an exciting rescue with the coastal rangers, who raid Mystery Island to rescue Zoe. Dezi abandons his son and escapes, but is captured by robot dogs when he falls into a sinkhole. His right-hand woman, Rebecca, steals Dezi's submarine and makes a getaway, but thanks to some dolphins is tracked and caught. With Dezi and his sidekicks in jail, Dom is invited to stay with the sisters and their uncle and aunt ... and is reunited with the mother that he'd been led to believe had died when he was five.

## About the Author

Tauranga author Carol Garden has been writing for a living as a journalist and communications manager for many years. In the 2020 Covid lockdown she wrote her first children's novel, *Kidnap at Mystery Island*. A keen sailor, Carol used the beautiful islands of the Mercury Bay area as the book's setting. When Carol is not writing or sailing, she tutors students in NCEA English, writing and literacy.

*Kidnap at Mystery Island* won the Storylines Tom Fitzgibbon Award in 2021 for 'best novel by an unpublished author'.

# Writing Style

*Kidnap at Mystery Island* is a futuristic adventure story set in Aotearoa. Beginning with a prologue that describes the societal changes since the great Environment Revolution of 2072, the heroes of the novel are coastal rangers and commandos, in this case the Walker family. The protagonist, Dom, is also on the right side of environmental issues, but his situation is complicated because his father is Dezi Krate, a wealthy, dangerous Anti-Ec.

A classic tale of good versus evil told in the third person, the plot is fast-paced and action-packed. The younger characters have special talents through genetic modification, so combine that with kidnap, sabotage and a military-style rescue and there is plenty of action to keep the reader turning the pages. However, this is also a rite-of-passage novel, as Dom battles with the dilemma of upholding his personal moral code at the risk of losing his father. Ultimately, Dom discovers family love and acceptance with the Walkers and, finally, his mother, who he had been told was dead.

Told in 32 short chapters, themes include: the environment, future Aotearoa, the criminal underworld, future technologies, good versus evil, personal loyalties, friendship and family bonds.

## Shared Learning and Discussion Points

During the shared sessions, encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of characters and events. Have them make predictions and inferences and relate these to their own experiences or prior knowledge. Read the passages aloud with students reading along in their own copy, or reading by themselves.

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS

Look at the cover and read the blurb.

- When and where is this story set? How can you tell?
- What is the black object on the front cover?
- What super-power would a 'human chameleon' have?
- Who is the main character in the story? Who might the other main characters be?
- What do you think this story might be about? Why do you think that?

### Comprehension questions

- Why do you think the Anti-Ecs thought that global warming was a hoax? Whose interests do you think they are serving? What is the purpose of a prologue?
- Why did Dom want a game that his father described as 'propaganda that manipulated young minds'? What is Dom's main problem? (Chapter 1, pp.7-9) What special skill does Dom have? (Chapter 1, p.6)
- What special talent does Annie have? (Chapter 2, pp.11-12)
- What is a hologram and why would it be useful for home security? (Chapter 2, p.14)
- Why are the family vehicles all forms of water transport? Do you think this would be common in this era? Why/why not? (Chapter 2, p.14)
- Predict who you think owns the submarine. (Chapter 2, p.16)
- What does 'stealth mode' mean? Why would a sailboat or submarine be operating in stealth mode? (Chapter 3, p.17)
- What is the role of a coastal ranger? What does this tell you about how society has changed from now to the future time of the New World? (Chapter 3, pp.17-18)
- Why do you think Annie, Mia, and Zoe look so different to each other, despite having the same parents? (Chapter 3, p.19) Why do you think this is common in the New World? What would be the positive and negative impacts of this?
- The Anti-Ecs operate in 'terrorist cells'. (Chapter 3, p.23) What is a terrorist?
- Both double speech marks and single speech marks are used in this book. Take a look at some examples. Can you work out when each form of punctuation is used? What are italics used for?
- What is the meaning of 'blackmail'? (Chapter 3, p.26)
- Liquid nitroglycerin also has a more common name. (Chapter 4, p.32) Can you guess what it is? (Hint: It starts with a 'd')
- As a child, Scarface had wanted to be a commando. What do you think happened to turn him to the 'wrong side of the law'? (Chapter 4, p.37) Do you agree with his belief that 'dreams don't come true'? Why/why not?
- What is Akarana currently known as?
- Would you like to be able to read other people's thoughts? What would be the advantages and disadvantages? (Chapter 5, p.49)



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- Why does Dezi Krate want to kidnap one of the Walker girls? (Chapter 6, p.50) What does his attitude towards the men he'd hired for the kidnapping tell you about him? (p.51)
- What is Dezi's master plan? (Chapter 6, pp.53–54)
- Is it fair that Dezi wants Dom to work in the family business eventually? Why/why not? (Chapter 6, pp.55–56)
- Dezi believes that 'when you have money and power, there's always an exit strategy'. (Chapter 6, p.56) What aspects of life are not impacted by money and power?
- Who do you think is more at fault in the argument between Annie and Zoe? (Chapter 7, pp.60–61) What risk have the girls forgotten?
- How has the author used irony in Dezi's choice of Aotearoa as his home base because it was 'the healthiest place in the world to raise his son'? (p.54) Read on to Chapter 8, p.65. How is it ironic that Dezi chose the chameleon talent for Dom, thinking that it would 'make him useful as a spy' (p.55)? What is Dom's 'secret weapon'? (p.65)
- Why do you think Dom didn't tell his father about Rebecca hurting him badly? (Chapter 8, p.67)
- What kind of life has Dom had?
- At the end of Chapter 8, Dom wonders 'what was Dezi up to this time?' Predict what you think will happen in Chapter 9 and then read on. How does your prediction match up?
- What is a 'gurney'? (Chapter 10, p.77) How do you think Zoe is feeling?
- What kind of person is Rebecca? Choose two quotes from the text to back up your opinion.
- What does 'sabotaging' mean? (Chapter 11, p. 85) What would you do if your parent was involved in criminal activity that hurt other people and the planet?
- What is the definition of 'traitor'? (Chapter 11, p.89) Do you think Dezi's ex-wife was a traitor? Why/why not? What kind of a person locks up their partner?
- What would you do at the end of Chapter 11 if you were Dom? What do you think Dom is going to do?
- How do Mia and Annie use their special talents to help rescue Zoe? Why do the dolphins and seals help Annie?
- Why does Annie feel responsible for Zoe being kidnapped?
- Predict how Pearl and Blake will respond to the demands of the kidnappers. What is at stake? (Chapter 13, p.102)
- What advantages do the Walkers have? (Chapter 13, pp.104–105)
- What is the Walkers' plan? Why do you think they have split into two rescue teams, plus the team at the Dome? (Chapter 13, pp.105–109)
- What does Zoe do to keep herself calm and in control? (Chapter 14, pp.111–115, 121; Chapter 16, p.138)
- What do you notice about the food in this book? What changes to people's diets are likely to happen in the future? Why is this?
- What do Zoe and Dom have in common? (Chapter 14, pp.118–119) Why does Dom want to help Zoe? What is his plan? (p.125)
- To survive personally and to help Zoe escape, Dom has to hide who he really is and what he thinks from his father. How does Dom feel about this? (Chapter 16, pp.138–139) Is he a chameleon inside and out?
- What part does Nyra the seal play in Zoe's rescue? (Chapter 17, pp.146–147; Chapter 18, pp.153–156, 158)
- What does Dezi use the shark tank for? (Chapter 19, p.163) What kind of person is he?
- Why did Tom, Michelle and Annie secure Jackie more thoroughly than they had secured Tina, Toby and Jamal? (Chapter 20, p.177)
- Rebecca's mother taught her that 'life is too short to be nice'. (Chapter 21, p.181) Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why do you have that view? Is it Rebecca's fault that she is not a nice person? Why/why not?
- Why does Pearl trust Dom? (Chapter 21, p.185)
- How must Zoe feel, knowing that Dezi had thought about killing her? How must Dom feel, knowing that his dad had those thoughts? (Chapter 21, p.188)
- Why did Michelle drag Rebecca from the generator room? (Chapter 22, p.195)
- At the end of Chapter 23, Rebecca has gone. Where do you think she has gone to? Do you think she has gone for good? Why/why not?
- When Dezi escapes, he abandons Dom. What are the two possible fates Dezi thinks Dom is faced with? (Chapter 24, pp.209–210) What does Dezi care about the most?
- Compare and contrast Michelle and Rebecca, using examples from the text. How are they the same? How are they different?
- How is Annie feeling when 'she put on her toughest face and trained the gun on the group'? (Chapter 26, p.221)
- What are the 'conflicting emotions' Dom is feeling at the beginning of Chapter 27? What character traits does Dom show? (p.227)
- What life lessons does Zoe learn from Dom? (Chapter 27, p.231)
- What does it say about Dezi that he doesn't care where his abandoned heli-jet will land? (Chapter 28, pp.238–239)
- What is the English name for Ōtautahi? (Chapter 29, p.240)
- Why does Dom feel embarrassed and nervous when he meets Annie? (Chapter 31, p.254)
- What does the 'warmth and freshness' of the Walkers' cave house represent? Why is this something Dom 'had never experienced before'? (Chapter 31, p.257)



- What does it say about the Walkers that they took Dom into their home and family, despite the fact that it was Dom's father who had kidnapped Zoe? Why did they do this? (Chapter 31)
- How do Blake and Pearl support Dom in the final chapter? (Chapter 32) Use examples from the text to support your answer.
- Explain how Dom feels when he discovers that Dezi was lying about his mother being dead. (Chapter 22, pp.264–266)
- What technique has the author used to conclude the story? Is it a satisfactory ending? Why/why not?
- The author wrote about some of the same events from the perspectives of different characters. What effect does this have? Is this something you could try in your own writing?
- What was your favourite part of the book? What did you like most about that part?

## Activities

### ACTIVITY 1: DREAM IT, BE IT!

If you could choose your own special talent, what would it be? Would you choose to be a human chameleon like Dom, breathe underwater and communicate with sea creatures like Annie, be super smart like Mia, have mind-reading abilities like Zoe, or would you prefer another talent?

Draw a picture of yourself that shows your talent and label any special features you have. Add a caption that explains what your talent is, how you use it, and what it is useful for.

### ACTIVITY 2: BECOME A TECH DESIGNER

Design your own piece of technology that is suitable for the New World. Make a poster advertising your product. Include:

- A title (the name of your product)
- A detailed diagram of your tech invention, with parts labelled.
- A short paragraph describing what your technology does and who it is suitable for. Be persuasive and 'sell' your product.

### ACTIVITY 3: TALK TO THE ANIMALS

If people today could communicate with animals, how would life be different? How could the animals help people? How could people help the animals?

In a small group, write a short play with both animals and people as characters. What do the animals want people to know and do? What do people want the animals to know and do? What problem needs to be solved? Who will take charge? How will the problem be resolved?

Practise the play and perform it to the class.

### ACTIVITY 4: NEW WORLD WORD SEARCH

Make a New World word search grid using some of the following words from the book:

MYSTERY ISLAND, NEW WORLD, GENETIC MODIFICATIONS, WATCHPHONE, DOGBOTS, COMMANDOS, COASTAL RANGERS, DOME, ENVIRONMENT REVOLUTION, ANTI-ECS, SAFETY ROOM, CHAMELEON, WAVE-ENERGY CONVERTER, COASTAL CONTROL, HOLOGRAM, HELIJET, TASER.

### ACTIVITY 5: ONE YEAR ON...

Write a short description of how you think Dom's life would be one year on from the conclusion. Consider the following questions: Where does he live? Who does he live with? Who are his friends? Has he visited Dezi? What hobbies or interests has he developed? Is he happy or unhappy?

Written by Frances McBeath



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