

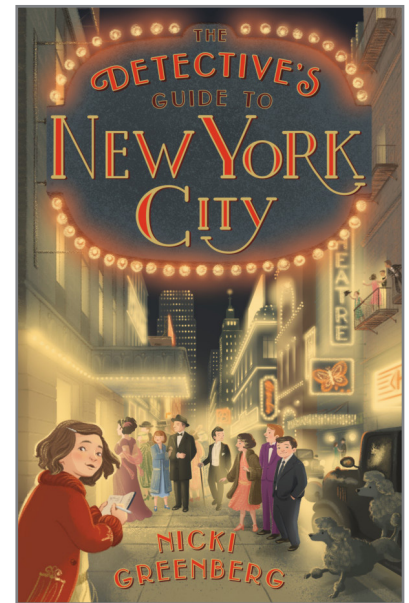
The Detective's Guide to New York City

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary



SYNOPSIS

Pepper Stark is thrilled to be returning to the grit and glitter of New York City. She can't wait to go exploring with her father, the Captain, and reunite with her fellow detectives, aspiring Broadway star Norah and up-and-coming pastry chef Sol. Even when the Captain invites along his new 'friend' Emmaline and her son Elliott, Pepper is determined to make the most of her time in the city that never sleeps.

But then notorious food critic Anthony 'the Shark' Sharkey is taken ill after dining at the restaurant where Sol works, Pepper finds herself entangled in another murky mystery. Pepper, Sol, Norah and—reluctantly—Elliott are facing an even bigger challenge than the Saffron Diamond affair, and the stakes have never been so high. If they don't find the culprit, Sol's career could be over...or worse. And the Big Apple might become the place where all of their dreams turn to dust.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicki Greenberg is a writer and illustrator based in Melbourne. Her first books, The Digits series, were published when she was fifteen years old. She later spent ten years disguised as a lawyer, while maintaining a not-so-secret Other Life as a comics artist and children's book author. In 2008 Nicki's innovative graphic adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* was selected as a White Raven at the Bologna Book Fair. She then went on to tackle *Hamlet* in a lavish 425-page 'staging on the page'. *Hamlet* was joint winner of the 2011 Children's Book Council of Australia Picture Book of the Year award.

Inspired by her own young children, Nicki now dedicates most of her ink to books for younger readers. Her favourite activity is making books, but when she does manage to tear herself away from the desk, Nicki loves to crochet bizarre sea creatures.

STUDY NOTES

- Research what else is happening in the US during the time the book is set, 1927. Don't just look at important historical moments, but what was happening in theatre, motion pictures and on Broadway.
- Read the following passage and compare it to a basic map of New York City. Mark the main character's journey (using a key where necessary).
 - 'All through Customs [Ellis Island], and then in the taxi up Eighth Avenue from West Fourteenth Street to West Forty-Seventh, she [Pepper] hardly paused for breath. There's Penn Station, remember? And Macy's is just a block past it, in case you need anything to wear. Our place is only two blocks in the other direction, but it's a world away,

really. Right at the top of Hell's Kitchen — you won't be doing any sightseeing around there! Even the policemen daren't walk through our neighbourhood unless they go in pairs. But we're cheek by jowl with the theatre district, see? If you don't mind the ruffians and the rats, it's probably the second-best address in Manhattan ...'

- Look at photos of these places from the 1920s and compare them to present-day photos. What's changed?
- This book is set in the 1920s, so there will be lots of language that is specific to the time that you may not be familiar with. Look at the below list of words. Do you know what these words mean? If not, see if you can find out their definitions using a dictionary, then choose a word to use in a sentence.
 - Trepidation
 - Oblige
 - Dowager
 - Consternation
 - Parquetry
 - Malarkey
 - Gramophone
 - Gormless
 - Gangway
 - Perambulate
 - Slovenly
 - Palaver
 - Filigree
 - Animosity
 - Feign.
- At the beginning of the book, you will find letters between the three main characters: Pepper, Norah and Sol.
 - Do people still write letters to friends and family? Do you write letters?
 - Why do you think people would still write letters today?
 - What sorts of things would someone write in a letter to a friend or family member?
 - Why did Pepper, Norah and Sol write letters to each other?
 - What is the modern equivalent of a letter?
 - What sort of language would be used in a letter to a friend?
 - Do you think a child writing a letter today would use similar or different language to that used by the characters in this book?
- In Chapter Six, a journalist writes a review of the events at *Les Trois Moineaux* which had taken place the night before. Choose an event in the novel and write a review of it as if you are a newspaper reporter. You will need to include the following in your report:
 - An attention-grabbing headline
 - Your name (or a pseudonym) as the author
 - A clear introduction that tantalises the audience and makes them want to read on
 - Three to four paragraphs outlining what has happened (keep in mind the most important things come first, but remember that you want to keep your audience reading!)
 - A conclusion that sums up your points and ends strongly.

THEMES

NEW YORK CITY: A PLACE OF CONTRASTS

- Compare the different impressions of New York City that you encounter in this book. What are some similarities and differences?
- How does Pepper view New York City at the beginning of this book? Does this change as she spends more time in the city? Why/why not?
- Both Norah and Sol have jobs in New York City, but they live and work in different areas of the city. Describe the

similarities and differences in the lifestyles that they lead. What does Pepper learn about the city through seeing it with Norah and Sol?

- The Captain proclaims that New York City is 'a different city from one month to the next'. What does he mean by this? Why would the city be changing so much at this time?
- What impression do you have of New York City? How is this informed: by movies, TV shows, other books? If you've visited the city in person, how did it compare to your expectations?

FAMILY, FRIENDSHIP AND CHANGE

- Pepper's family has changed since the last book. How does Pepper feel about Emmaline and Elliott joining her and the Captain on their holiday? Does she warm to one before the other? Does her opinion of the pair change over the course of the story? How and why?
- How would you describe Pepper's relationship with her father in this book?
- Is the Captain aware of how Pepper feels about his relationship with Emmaline? How can you tell? Why might the Captain behave as he does?
- Why does Pepper become upset about the Captain and Emmaline spending time in some of Pepper's favourite places in New York City? How does this become resolved?
- Pepper visits her two good friends, Norah and Sol, and sees New York City through their eyes. How might their lives have changed since the last time the three of them were together?
- Is Elliott welcomed easily into the group? What tensions arise between them and how are they resolved?
- Do Pepper and Elliott have a lot in common? Describe some of their similarities and differences.
- Choose an event from the book and write it from another character's point of view. Some examples you can choose from include:
 - Pepper arriving in New York City. How is Norah feeling about her friend arriving?
 - The scene in *Les Trois Moineaux* when Anthony Sharkey is poisoned. How might Sol feel about working in the kitchen while his friends dine in the restaurant?
 - The scene in which Emmaline takes the children to the opera. How might Emmaline be feeling about the trip so far? Is she happy with her relationship with Pepper at this point?
 - When the children help out in the kitchen of *Les Trois Moineaux* following the poisoning. How does Elliott feel in this situation? Why does he need to leave, and how might he feel about that?

AMERICAN SOCIETY IN THE 1920S

- Think of all the women in this book: do they adhere to gender norms of the time? What are some of the ways that women in this book reject the status quo? How are they viewed by society as a result?
- Loretta Wilder's rise to fame is a classic 'rags to riches' story: she was born into poverty and became a huge success. What does Loretta's rise to fame suggest about New York City? Can you think of other 'rags to riches' success stories that have come from New York City? Does the city still have a reputation for being a place of dreams?
- There are two 'types' of wealth shown in this book: 'old money' and 'new money'. What are the differences? Was one seen as more superior than the other? Which characters have old and new money?
- In this book, race segregation is shown through the jazz clubs, wherein the patrons were white and the musicians were African American. How does Pepper react to this segregation, and what does this say about her life experience and upbringing? Are you aware of any other situations in which Americans were segregated by the colour of their skin?
- Would Elliott's interest in fashion be considered unusual for the time? Why? How would society view Elliott's passion for fashion today in comparison to in the 1920s?
- How much do you know about Prohibition? What do the events in this book tell you about it? Who broke Prohibition laws in this book? Do you think this is an accurate portrayal of Prohibition law-breaking; why/why not?
- Taking two characters from this book, such as Pepper and Loretta, compare and contrast their upbringing, current lifestyle, clothing, views, and opportunities. This can be done as a comparative table or through written profiles of the characters. The aim is to understand the differences in social class, so it's best to pick characters from different walks of life.

- Fashion was very different in the 1920s to what it is now. Research what was fashionable in NYC at this time, taking into account the new styles that were emerging and the old styles that were still worn by many. Draw or write a profile for both an upper-class person and a working-class person. How was the clothing different?
- The 19th Amendment was passed in the 1920s, giving women the right to vote in America. Research the Suffragette movement and put together a timeline/poster showing key events, people and protests that were a part of the American women's path to political freedom. Or, after researching, you could imagine how the characters in this book responded to women finally having the right to vote. Write a diary entry or a letter from one of the characters.

LOYALTY

- Sol describes the kitchen as 'a family'. What makes him think that the kitchen is or should be like a family? How does this compare to the way that the kitchen 'family' treat each other in the book?
- What is Lenny's experience of working life in the kitchen? What do you think of the way he is treated by the head chefs and Sol? Why does he 'snitch' on the chefs and do you think his behaviour is justified?
- The Captain takes loyalty very seriously aboard his ship. Why might loyalty be 'the glue' that binds crew members together at sea? Is this similar or different to other workplaces? Why?
- How does Pepper show loyalty to her friends? Is loyalty important to Pepper?
- What does loyalty mean to Pepper in regards to her father and her late mother? How does Pepper expect loyalty to her mother's memory? Does she communicate this effectively to the Captain and Emmaline?
- What does loyalty mean for the married couples in this book? Are there instances of a married spouse being disloyal to their partner?
- There are a few mentions of the police pretending not to know about alcohol consumption, or even being paid off to ignore characters breaking Prohibition law. What does this say about the police loyalty to gangsters and other characters like the head chef?
- There are many characters who are reliant on each other for one thing or another. Make a list or create a mind-map of who is reliant on who for loyalty. What form does that loyalty take? How are the various characters connected?
- Pretend that you are Sol, and that you don't yet know who the culprit was who poisoned Anthony Sharkey. You don't want to believe that anyone in your kitchen would do such a thing, or provide information to the police or journalists about another kitchen co-worker. Write a diary entry from Sol's perspective that elaborates on the theme of loyalty. You may like to reflect on what loyalty means to Sol, and how he believe that loyalty should be shown. Be as creative as possible!