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THE HIDDEN DAGGER

The Story in Brief

In England around 1600, a young boy witnesses a lord's murder. Walter is the son of a clothier—a man who employs people to weave cloth from wool and then sells it to others. Walter is delivering some cloth to the castle. As he waits for the seamstress in a small room off the great hall, he overhears an argument between Lord Fanshaw and his scoundrel brother, Thomas. Walter hears Thomas threaten to kill Lord Fanshaw. As Thomas retreats, he comes upon Walter. He comments that Walter is an eavesdropper, and leaves.

Walter worries that Thomas will kill Lord Fanshaw. He tells his father, who advises him to stay out of the affairs of the castle. Walter also tells his friend Will Barnes, a 20-year-old farmer who is known for raising disturbances by talking politics. At the present time, Will is telling the villagers that Lord Fanshaw's enclosure scheme is unfair. Will promises to take care of Lord Fanshaw before he can fence off the land that the peasants now use for grazing purposes. Walter asks Will's advice about Thomas' threat to Lord Fanshaw. Will tells Walter that Lord Fanshaw is well protected. He promises Walter that if Thomas does kill Lord Fanshaw, Will will find a way to protect Walter.

Then, on Walter's next delivery trip to the castle, he again overhears the two men arguing. This time, however, Walter hears Thomas stab Lord Fanshaw to death. Then he hears a clanking sound. Walter hides behind a chest as Thomas escapes from the castle. Walter realises too late

that Thomas probably has seen the cloth Walter left lying on the table.

Walter, who is known around town for his fanciful imagination and stories, worries that Thomas will try to kill him so there will be no witness to the murder. Walter runs home and tells his parents what has happened. His father suggests that Will Barnes may be in trouble since he has been making public threats against Lord Fanshaw. Walter spends a sleepless night, afraid for Will and himself. He vows to warn Will at his first chance. At school the next morning, Master Smythe, the school-teacher, announces that Lord Fanshaw has been murdered and Will Barnes has been charged with the murder.

Walter tries to think how he can save Will. Commoners aren't allowed to charge royalty with crimes without having incriminating evidence. Walter remembers the clanking sound he heard after the murder, and he decides Thomas has hidden his bloody dagger somewhere in the great hall.

When Walter and his family visit the castle to pay their condolences, Walter studies the room as he waits in line with his mother. He notices a huge vase and is able to extract Thomas' dagger with his coat of arms and Lord Fanshaw's dried blood. Most of the village is present, including the village constable, when Walter shows sufficient evidence that Thomas is guilty of the murder. Will Barnes will be set free.



THE HIDDEN DAGGER

Background Summary–Chapter 1

Using Short Vowels

Read the words in the word box. Each word contains a short vowel sound. Say the words to yourself and listen for the short vowel sounds. Then read each sentence. Choose a word from the word box to complete each sentence. Write your answer on the blank line.

castle	lucky	rich
imagine	clutching	Fanshaw
splendid	cloth	dagger
grammar	threaten	

Example: Walter overheard Thomas _____ *threaten* _____ Lord Fanshaw.

1. Walter told _____ stories about knights in battle.
2. The Poresbys weren't _____ but they weren't poor either.
3. Thomas stood _____ the cloth as he listened to the argument.
4. Lord _____ was the older brother, so the land belonged to him.
5. The _____ had a small delivery room that led to the great hall.
6. Walter thought he could hear a _____ being drawn.
7. Walter could _____ the blade gleaming in the firelight.
8. Thomas saw that Walter was delivering _____ to the castle.
9. Thomas told Walter that he would be _____ to get paid for the cloth.
10. Walter went to _____ school with Master Edward.



THE HIDDEN DAGGER

Background Summary–Chapter 1

Adding Endings

Read each sentence. Then look at the word shown in parentheses at the end of the sentence. Add an ending such as *-ed*, *-ing*, *-s*, or *-er* to the word to make it fit in the sentence. Remember, you may need to change the word when you add the ending. Write the new word in the blank.

Example: At the time of this story, there weren't many _____ *cities* _____. (city)

1. Most of the land _____ to lords. (belong)
2. Walter knew what could happen when _____ men fought. (grow)
3. Angry voices _____ through the castle. (echo)
4. Walter thought Thomas sounded _____ serious. (dead)
5. What could he do? Walter felt _____. (help)
6. Walter thought Lady Anne was _____. (beauty)
7. Walter's father worked as a _____. (cloth)
8. Walter overheard Thomas _____ Lord Fanshaw. (threat)
9. When her father ordered her to go, Lady Anne left _____. (quick)
10. The argument between Lord Fanshaw and Thomas sounded _____. (danger)