

Name : Class: Date:

Hidden Truths Mystery & Horror

The Empty Attic

1

The attic had been closed long before Rowan's family moved into the house.

His parents described it as an unfinished space above the second floor—unused, unnecessary, and empty. They mentioned it once, then never again. At the time, Rowan accepted the explanation. The house itself demanded enough attention, with its narrow hallways and quiet corners.

During the day, the house felt ordinary. Sound traveled easily from room to room. Doors creaked, sunlight reached the walls, and nothing suggested that any part of the house had been set apart.

At night, Rowan noticed what was missing.

When he lay in bed, voices from downstairs faded sooner than expected. The hum of the television never reached the ceiling. Even the small sounds of the house settling seemed to stop short, as though the upper level absorbed them.

The silence gathered near the attic door.

Rowan became aware of it one evening while walking down the hallway. The overhead light cast a narrow strip across the floor, ending just before the attic door. As he approached, the quiet felt heavier, more deliberate.

He stopped.

Nothing happened.

Still, Rowan lingered longer than necessary before returning to his room.

Over the following weeks, the awareness followed him. The attic produced no sound, yet it remained present in his thoughts. Music, laughter, and arguments never seemed to reach it. The space above the ceiling felt separate from the rest of the house.



Name : Class: Date:

One night, Rowan tested the silence.

He stood beneath the attic door and clapped once. The sound echoed down the hallway, then stopped abruptly. He tried again, louder. The result was the same.

At dinner the next evening, Rowan mentioned the attic. His parents exchanged a brief glance.

“There’s nothing up there,” his mother said.

“It hasn’t been opened in years,” his father added.

Their voices were calm, but final.

That night, Rowan dreamed of stairs leading upward into darkness. He climbed without effort, surrounded by quiet that felt patient rather than threatening. When he reached the top, there was no door—only space pressing down.

He woke with a tightness in his chest.

The following afternoon, while his parents were out, Rowan stood before the attic door again. Up close, it looked ordinary: plain wood, slightly scuffed, with a small latch near the frame.

The latch was not locked. It never had been.

Rowan hesitated. Every instinct told him to leave the door alone. Still, the absence pressed against him, demanding attention.

He lifted the latch.

The ladder unfolded with a muted sound, releasing stale air. Dust rose and settled in the hallway light. Rowan stood at the base of the ladder and listened.

The attic did not greet him with sound.

He climbed carefully. The ladder creaked softly beneath his weight. When Rowan reached the top, he paused.

The attic stretched out before him—dim and low. Exposed beams crossed the ceiling. The floorboards were coated in dust. There were no boxes, no furniture, no signs of use. It appeared exactly as his parents had described.

Name : Class: Date:

Yet the silence felt different here.

It was complete.

Rowan stepped inside. His movements felt slower, as though the air resisted him. Each footstep produced a muted creak that fell quickly into stillness.

Near the center of the attic, he noticed a small irregularity. One section of floorboards was darker than the rest.

He knelt and brushed away dust. The wood beneath was smoother, less worn by time.

Rowan pressed down gently. The board shifted.

Beneath it lay a folded piece of fabric. Inside was a thin notebook, its pages yellowed and brittle. Rowan opened it carefully. The handwriting was neat but uneven.

The entries spoke of waiting. Of promises made and never acknowledged. Dates appeared without explanation. One name appeared again and again.

Rowan closed the notebook.

The silence deepened, pressing closer. He became aware of the roof above, the weight of everything held in place.

He replaced the notebook and lowered the floorboard.

As he descended the ladder, the attic remained silent. Rowan closed the door and secured the latch.

That night, he slept without dreams.

In the morning, sunlight filled the hallway. The attic door stood unchanged. The space above the ceiling felt lighter—not empty, but settled.

Rowan understood then that the attic had never been meant to be opened.

It had only been meant to be acknowledged.

Name : Class: Date:

Hidden Truths Mystery & Horror Questions

The Empty Attic

1. What details in the passage suggest that the attic's silence is intentional rather than ordinary?

2. What is a central theme of the passage, and how is it developed through Rowan's experiences?

3. How does Rowan's response to the attic change from the beginning to the end of the story?

Name : Class: Date:

4. How does the author's word choice contribute to the mood of restraint and unease?

5. How does the structure of the passage build suspense before the attic is opened?

6. What evidence suggests that Rowan's parents are deliberately avoiding the attic?

7. From what point of view is the story told, and how does this perspective shape the reader's understanding?

Name : Class: Date:

8. What might the notebook symbolize in relation to the theme of hidden truths?

9. How does silence function as a form of communication in the passage?

10. What is the central conflict of the story, and how is it resolved?

Hidden Truths Mystery & Horror

Common Core-Aligned Reading Comprehension Questions and Answers

The Empty Attic

Standards Addressed: RL.9-10.1–RL.9-10.6

1. Question Type: Text Evidence

Standard: RL.9-10.1

Answer: The attic absorbs sound and remains unchanged even after it is opened, indicating deliberate restraint rather than simple neglect.

2. Question Type: Theme / Central Idea

Standard: RL.9-10.2

Answer: A central theme is that some truths remain present even when unspoken, shown through silence, avoidance, and acknowledgment.

3. Question Type: Character Response

Standard: RL.9-10.3

Answer: Rowan moves from unease and curiosity to understanding, ultimately choosing acknowledgment instead of exposure.

4. Question Type: Word Choice / Mood

Standard: RL.9-10.4

Answer: Words such as “restrained,” “complete,” and “pressing” create a controlled and uneasy mood.

5. Question Type: Structure / Suspense

Standard: RL.9-10.5

Answer: The delayed opening of the attic and gradual revelation of details build suspense throughout the passage.

6. Question Type: Evidence-Based Inference

Standard: RL.9-10.1

Answer: The parents’ brief, final responses and lack of explanation suggest intentional avoidance.

7. Question Type: Point of View

Standard: RL.9-10.6

Answer: The story is told from a third-person limited perspective, allowing readers to experience events through Rowan's awareness.

8. Question Type: Symbolism

Standard: RL.9-10.4

Answer: The notebook symbolizes suppressed memory and unacknowledged history.

9. Question Type: Interpretation of Theme

Standard: RL.9-10.2

Answer: Silence acts as a boundary, communicating what should remain untouched.

10. Question Type: Central Conflict

Standard: RL.9-10.3

Answer: The conflict between uncovering and respecting hidden truth resolves when Rowan chooses restraint.

Teacher Notes

The Empty Attic

Grade Level: 9th–10th Grade

Suggested Time: 45–60 minutes

Purpose:

This passage explores how silence and restraint can preserve hidden truths and shape understanding.

Skills Focus:

- Text-based inference
- Theme and central idea
- Mood and tone
- Narrative structure
- Symbolism and conflict

Standards Alignment:

RL.9–10.1–RL.9–10.6

Teaching Tips:

- Pause reading before the attic is opened to encourage prediction.
- Emphasize evidence-based responses rather than personal opinion.
- Discuss how acknowledgment functions as resolution.