Helping your children choose books they will love

I ♥ reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

opening extract from

Amy Wild, Animal Talker: The Secret Necklace

written by

Diana Kimpton

published by

Usborne Publishing Ltd

All Text is Copyright © of the Author / Illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Amy’s new bedroom was in the attic, at the top of two flights of stairs.

“We’ll leave you to get unpacked,” said Mum. “I’m sure you’ll feel better when you’ve settled in.”

The room was old-fashioned but appealing. The ceiling sloped, there were yellow roses on the wallpaper and the window looked out over the sea. Amy would have loved it if she was here on holiday. But she wasn’t. This wasn’t just going to be her room for a week. This was hers for ever, and it was completely different from her room at home – the one she would never see again.

That thought triggered a wave of homesickness, so she went over to the only familiar objects in the whole room – two big boxes standing beside the bed. She knew what was in those.

She'd packed them herself, filling them with everything she wanted to send ahead to the Island.

She opened the nearest one and pulled out the bundle of crumpled newspaper that contained her model animals. She unwrapped each of them carefully and arranged them on top of the chest of drawers. Perhaps they would make this strange room look more like home.

The last animal she unpacked was a china cat. The sight of it made her remember the cats outside in the road. Had they really been watching her or had she imagined it?

Suddenly something furry brushed against her leg. She jumped back in surprise and saw that it was Hilton. She'd been so absorbed in her task that she hadn't heard him come in.

The terrier wagged his tail when she stroked his soft, fluffy head. Amy felt better with him beside her. Hilton was the best thing so far about Clamerkin. She had always wanted a dog, but Dad had said it wasn't fair to have one in the city.

“I’m glad to see you’re making friends,” said Granty, as she staggered into the room. She dumped the tray she was carrying on the dressing table and sank down onto the bed, puffing and panting. “I’m getting too old for all those stairs. But I thought you’d like some lemonade and cake.”

“Thank you,” said Amy, as politely as she could. She still felt awkward with her great-aunt, especially after the strange things the old lady had said downstairs.

“Help yourself,” said Granty, nodding towards the tray.

Amy didn’t need any more encouragement. She had been travelling all day and been too upset to eat anything on the boat. Now the sight of the cake made her realize how hungry she was. It tasted delicious – moist and sweet with a hint of banana. It was also very crumbly, but Amy didn’t have to worry about the mess. Hilton happily licked the crumbs off the carpet.

“I do hope you like the room,” said Granty. She’d got her breath back by now, and her face looked less red.

“It’s lovely,” said Amy, without mentioning her homesickness.

“I *am* pleased,” replied Granty with a broad smile. “It’s such a long time since I was your age. I’m a bit out of touch with what modern girls like.”

“I like animals best,” said Amy. “And pop music and clothes and stuff like that.”

“Hmm,” said Granty thoughtfully. “Does jewellery count as stuff?”

“Definitely!”

“Good. Now I wonder what you think of this.” Granty put her hands to her throat and lifted something out from underneath her blouse. It was a necklace.

Amy sat down beside her on the bed and leaned forward for a better look. She’d never seen anything like it before. It was made of metal animal paws joined together like a chain. But the metal was dull, brown and unattractive. It didn’t shine at all.

Granty undid the clasp and held the necklace out to Amy. “Take it, my dear. You can see it better if you hold it.”

Amy didn’t like the necklace much. But she didn’t want to offend her great-aunt so she reached out and took it. As she did so, Hilton gave an excited bark and jumped up onto the bed.

Amy looked at him and laughed. He obviously wanted to see what was going on. Then she looked back at the necklace she was holding and stared in amazement. Something really weird was happening.

The necklace was changing before her eyes. The dullness was disappearing. The colour was growing lighter and brighter.

The process only took a few seconds. By the end of it, the necklace had stopped being brown and unattractive. Now it was a thing of beauty that gleamed and glittered like pure gold.

Amy turned it over in her hands, trying

to work out what had happened. “Is it some sort of trick?”

Granty shook her head and laughed. “You’ve done that, not me. The necklace stopped working for me as soon as I grew up – it always does for everyone.”

A shiver of excitement ran down Amy’s spine, mixed with a hint of fear. “What do you mean – it stopped working? What’s it supposed to do?”

Granty smiled. “Put it on and see. I promise it won’t hurt.”

Amy examined the necklace again. It looked completely harmless. If she hadn’t seen it change, she would never have suspected there was anything magical about it. She lifted it up slowly, placed it around her neck and fastened the catch.

Nothing happened. There was no clap of thunder, no puff of smoke and her reflection in the dressing-table mirror didn’t change at all. Amy felt disappointed. Perhaps the necklace wasn’t magic after all. Perhaps Granty had used a conjuring trick to make it change colour.

Then Hilton nudged her hand to attract her attention. “I’m glad you’ve come,” he said. “It’s time Clamerkin had a Talker again.”