

Welcome to the Magic Tree House

Dear Educator,

Start the new year on a magical note with familiar favorites, Jack and Annie, from the **Magic Tree House** series. The books in the **Magic Tree House Merlin Missions** series challenge students in grades 2 through 4 with more advanced literary devices and vocabulary, and the **Fact Trackers** — non-fiction companions to the **Magic Tree House** books — help students learn how to research, recall details, and understand the difference between fact and opinion.

The activities in this kit are based around two outstanding **Magic Tree House Merlin Missions** books: *Shadow of the Shark* and *A Crazy Day with Cobras*, and their two companion **Fact Trackers**, *Sharks and Other Predators* and *Snakes and Other Reptiles*. The activities, created by the curriculum experts at Young Minds Inspired (YMI) in cooperation with Random House Children's Books, include ready-to-go grammar and writing-focused lessons, as well as extension ideas designed to help stimulate creative thinking and integrate science and research skills into your ELA curriculum.

As an added bonus, you can receive a free pair of **Magic Tree House** and **Fact Tracker** books if you're among the first 50 teachers to respond using the request form at ymiclassroom.com/magictreehouse.



We hope that you will share this program with other teachers in your school. The materials are copyrighted, but you may make as many copies as necessary to meet your students' needs.

Please comment online at ymiclassroom.com/feedback-magictreehouse to let us know your thoughts on this program.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dominic Kinsley
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired

 For questions, contact us toll-free at 1-800-859-8005 or by e-mail at feedback@ymiclassroom.com.



© 2019 Mary Pope Osborne. Magic Tree House is a registered trademark of Mary Pope Osborne; used under license.



Target Audience

Students in grades 2 through 4

Program Components

- This downloadable guide including teacher instructions and three activity sheets
- Dedicated microsite with book request form. **The first 50 teachers who respond receive a free pair of Magic Tree House and Fact Tracker books.** Go to ymiclassroom.com/magictreehouse.

Activity 1

My Magic Tree House Story

Point out that almost every **Magic Tree House** book follows a similar pattern: Jack and Annie go on an adventure to a specific time and place where they work together to solve a problem or mystery and overcome obstacles along the way. This pattern is called the *story structure*, and most fiction books follow the same structure: The action rises, things get exciting, there's a climax, things settle down, and then, there's a resolution at the end. Each **Magic Tree House** book also features the same main characters (Jack and Annie), a familiar device (the magic tree house), and standard plot line (solve a mystery or problem), but the supporting characters, broader setting, and important details vary widely in each novel. These things make each story unique, exciting, and different, yet still familiar to the reader.

Pass out the activity sheet and tell the students that in Part 1 they are going to go on their own adventure by writing their own **Magic Tree House** story! Explain that the word clouds represent the pieces needed to fill in the characters, setting, and plot in their stories, and that they should choose one item from each word cloud and write their choices on the lines provided.

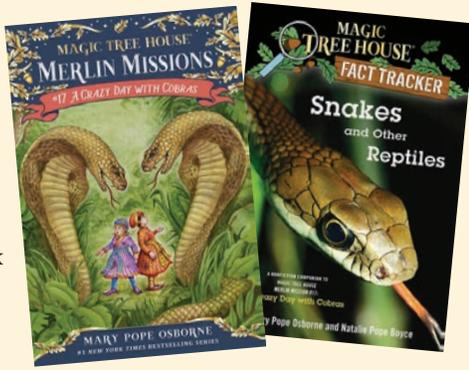
Then, in Part 2, have students write their own **Magic Tree House** story using the characters, setting, and plot they chose from the word clouds. They can do this individually or in small groups, depending on the students' writing ability. Remind students to make sure that their story has rising action, a climax, falling action, and a resolution. For example, in the **Merlin Missions** book, *A Crazy Day with Cobras*, the action rises as Jack and Annie go on a wild ride on an elephant, only to be threatened by a cobra, which is the climax of the story. The two manage to cleverly escape the cobra and make it safely back home, which comprises the falling action and resolution of the story.

Integrate Art! As an extension, have the students create posters illustrating their stories. When the posters are complete, host a "Magic Tree House Party" where the students can present their stories to the class and discuss their favorite real **Magic Tree House** book.

Activity 2

Scary Snakes?

Ask students to use descriptive words to tell you how they feel about snakes. Then tell students that Jack and Annie encounter a king cobra, the largest venomous snake in the world, in the **Magic Tree House Merlin Missions** book, *A Crazy Day with Cobras*. In the book, Jack and Annie travel back 400 years to ancient India, where they meet the leader of the Mogul Empire as they search for a rare emerald. They finally find the emerald in a snake's nest, but two king cobras are guarding it. Although the children are scared, they realize that the snakes are only guarding their eggs. With the information from their research book, Jack and Annie manage to get the emerald and escape the snakes without harm.



Read this fact to students:

A single bite from the king cobra contains enough venom to kill twenty men or a large elephant.

Based on that fact, Jack and Annie realize that king cobras have so much venom that even the largest of animals is in danger.

Tell students that sometimes people form opinions based on how they feel, rather than on a fact. For example, when Jack and Annie are riding an elephant, each forms an opinion about the experience. Read the following excerpt from the book:
Jack felt as if they were riding a big gray ship on waves of tall, yellow grass. "This is fun!" said Annie. Not really, thought Jack. Where in the world were they going?

Explain to the students that a fact is something that is true, while an opinion may or may not be based on fact. Tell students that you are going to read some sentences from the book. Ask them to give you a "thumbs up" if the sentence is a fact, and an "OK" if the sentence is an opinion.

- *"Cool fort," said Jack.*
- *In the 1600s, India was a vast land of crowded cities and countless villages.*
- *The snake had speckled yellow bands that ran around its scaly body.*

Tell students that nonfiction books usually only contain facts. Many of the **Magic Tree House** books have a nonfiction companion book called a **Fact Tracker** that lets you learn more about the topics in the book. For example, *A Crazy Day with Cobras* has a companion book called *Snakes and Other Reptiles*, which is full of fascinating facts.

Pass out the activity sheet. Explain that a student named Maria was writing a report about snakes, but she accidentally added

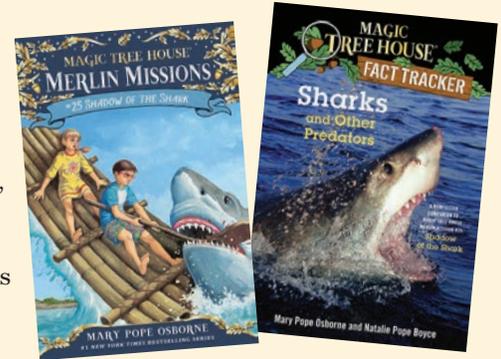
some opinions instead of sticking to the facts. Ask students to read the report and copy two opinion sentences from the report, and two facts-based sentences, on the lines provided.

Integrate Science! As an extension activity, go to whatsnakeisthat.com. Have students work in small groups to find out what kinds of snakes live in their area. Then ask them to choose one snake and create a "Fact or Opinion?" quiz about that snake.

Activity 3

Super Sharks!

Introduce students to another **Magic Tree House** book, *Shadow of the Shark*, in which Jack and Annie encounter a whale shark! In the book, Jack and Annie travel back in time to ancient Mexico, when the Mayans ruled the Yucatan. They explore an underwater reef, meet a Mayan king, and help a Mayan princess realize that she has the skills and smarts to be the next leader of her people.



Read these two sentences about whale sharks aloud to your students. Ask them to tell you which sentence they find most interesting, and why.

- *Sometimes whale sharks allow divers to hitch a ride.*
- *Sometimes these gentle giants allow divers to hitch a ride.*

Point out that the phrase "gentle giants" contains an *adjective* — a word that describes the noun "giants." Explain to the students that the second sentence is from the **Magic Tree House** book, and it is an example of how authors use adjectives to help make their stories more interesting and colorful. Then divide the students into small groups. Have each student use an adjective to describe an ordinary classroom item while the rest of the group tries to guess what they are describing.

Pass out the activity sheet. Remind students that adjectives describe nouns, and then ask the students to use the adjectives in the word box to fill in the blanks. In Part 2, have students draw a picture in the box provided depicting how the adjectives "color" one of the passages.

Integrate Social Studies! In *Shadow of the Shark*, the Mayan daughter of the king proves herself to be smart, brave, and wise. Back then, girls were not allowed to be leaders. Jack, knowing that girls and women can be leaders too, convinces the king to let his daughter be the next ruler. Have the students write about and draw a picture of who they want to be when they grow up.

Resources

- Magictreehouse.com
- Ymiclassroom.com



Part 1: It is time for you to send Jack and Annie on a new adventure! In **Magic Tree House** books, Jack and Annie always go on an adventure to a specific time and place where they work together to solve a problem or mystery. Remember that your story must have characters, a setting, and a plot.

Start with Annie and Jack. Then, read the word clouds. Choose a **character** for them to meet, a **setting** where they will meet that character, an **animal** they will encounter, and an **adventure** for them to have! Write your choices on the lines below each word cloud.

Characters—People



My choice: _____

Characters—Animals



My choice: _____

Settings



My choice: _____

Adventures



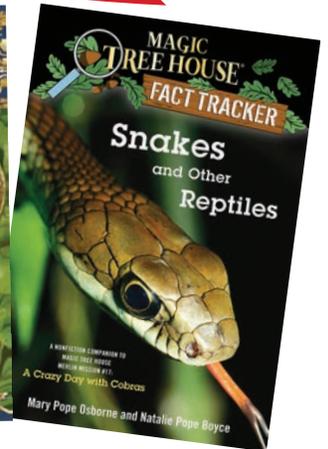
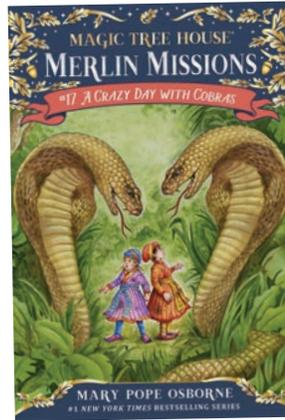
My choice: _____

Part 2: Now, on the back of this paper, write your own **Magic Tree House** story! Use the characters, setting, animal, and adventure you chose from the word clouds, and don't forget to include rising action, a climax, falling action, and a resolution or conclusion.

Scary Snakes?

Part 1: Maria's teacher told her to write a report about snakes, but she accidentally added some opinions instead of facts. Can you find the facts and opinions in her report? Choose two fact sentences and two opinion sentences, and copy them onto the lines below.

Snakes are found everywhere in the world except the Arctic, Antarctica, Ireland, Iceland, Greenland, and New Zealand. These are all places that get cold, so I think snakes don't like cold weather! Snakes shed their skin. Most times, it slips off all in one piece. One time, my brother found a snake's skin. He thought it was cool, but I thought it was gross! Many snakes have skin with bright colors or bold patterns. The diamond python's pattern is the most beautiful. Snakes can see movement very well and smell with their tongues. Can you imagine if people smelled with their tongues? Snakes are weird!



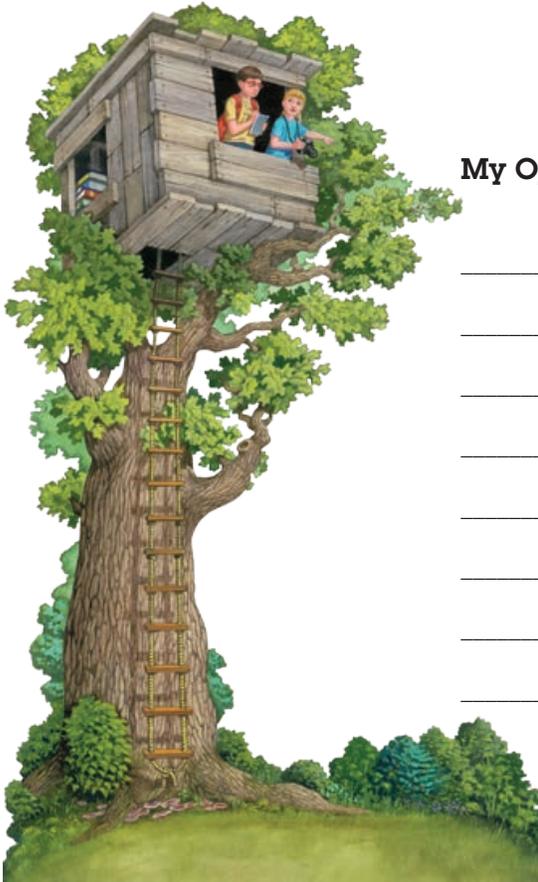
Fact sentence: _____

Fact sentence: _____

Opinion sentence: _____

Opinion sentence: _____

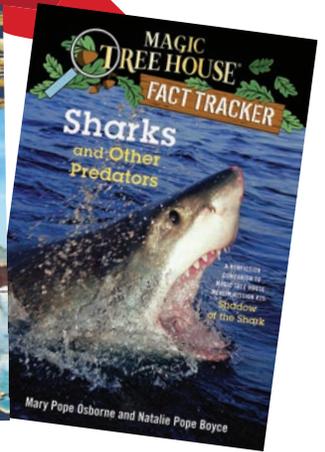
Part 2: Now, use complete sentences to write your own opinion about snakes!



My Opinion:

Part 1: Below are some passages about sharks. The passages are from *Sharks and Other Predators*, the **Fact Tracker** companion to *Shadow of the Shark*. Some of the words were left out! Use the adjectives in the word box to make the passages more interesting and colorful.

oily	tiny	unhealthy	small	large
	gas-filled	great	sick	



Most fish have _____ - _____ bladders to stay afloat. Sharks

don't have these. Instead, they have _____, _____ livers. Oil is lighter than water. If sharks keep swimming, this oil will keep them from sinking.

Because a shark's skin is made up of _____ scales that look like _____ teeth, it feels like sandpaper.

Sharks are _____ predators. They are an important part of the food chain. Sharks often prey on _____ or injured fish. By eating _____ fish, sharks keep the water cleaner and stop diseases from spreading to other fish.

Part 2: Draw a picture of one of the passages, focusing on the details the adjectives give it.

