

The House Swap by Yvette Clark.

Reading guide by OwlCrate Jr.



"The Parent Trap meets The Holiday in this heartwarming and funny story of two girls, one American and one British, who become friends and confidantes when their families swap houses, from the acclaimed author of *Glitter Gets Everywhere*.

Allie and Sage are complete opposites. Allie is British, a middle child, and dreams of being a spy. Sage is an only child from California who's into crystals. They're brought together when their parents arrange a house swap—Allie's family will spend a week at Sage's house in California while Sage and her mom stay in Allie's house for a visit to the British countryside.

This sweet and emotional story is told in alternating chapters from each girl's POV, offering two unique perspectives on family and belonging."

—Published by Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins

Key characters:

- **Allie** aka. Allegra Iris Greenwood (protagonist #1; aspiring spy)
- **Sage** (protagonist #2; crystal enthusiast)
- Willow (Allie's little sister)
- Max (Allie's older brother)
- Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood (Allie's parents)
- Mr. and Mrs. Grayson (Sage's parents)
- Bear (the Greenwood's dog)
- Chickpea, Nestle, Nugget (Allie's chickens)
- Pandora (Sage's cat)

Settings:

- **Cringle Cottage**, Oxfordshire, England (Allie's home)
- **Canyon View**, California, USA (Sage's home)



The House Swap by Yvette Clark.

Reading guide by OwlCrate Jr.

Reflection questions:

- Allie and Sage come from different countries and upbringings, but learn a lot about each other and their similarities by living in each other's spaces. If you could do a house swap with a family anywhere in the world, where would it be and why? Would it be in the summer or a different season?

"I knew it! Middle child syndrome is officially a thing. I sent my parents an article about it... They haven't read it." - Allie

"Even though I've got Nora and Nico and my other friends at school, sometimes 'only' feels like lonely." - Sage

- Do you have siblings? Whose family position can you relate to more, Allie the middle child, or Sage the only child? Reflect on your own family's dynamics and how they may be similar or different from the characters in *The House Swap*. Did this story make you consider a side that you may not have before?
- Are you more interested in learning about spy techniques or the properties of gemstones? Would you rather spend a day with Allie, Sage, or someone else in their families? Plan an itinerary for your perfect day with one character in the book.
- In Part Three: 'Away', Sage (with major help from Allie) tells a huge *Parent Trap*-style lie to try and keep her family together. Were you surprised by the plot twist? What would you have done if Sage was your friend and shared her plan with you?
- How do Allie and Sage each change from when we meet them to the end of the book? How do they stay the same?
- *The House Swap* is a contemporary story that includes topics like the complexity of family, the power of friendship, dealing with bullies, finding your place, and the value of honesty. Can you draw connections between this book and three other middle grade titles? Write down the title, author, year of publication, and at least one element that connects the stories.
- Reflection time! How was the story different than you may have expected when you started chapter one? Did you predict any plot points? What questions would you ask the author if you had the chance? Write a short review of this book that you could share with a friend or classmate who hasn't read the book yet.



The House Swap by Yvette Clark.

Reading guide by OwlCrate Jr.

Extension Activities:

Go Beyond The Book!

- Choose a quote or passage from the book and free write for 10 minutes about whatever it brings to mind. Not sure where to start? Pick from one of these:

“Thinking about my brother and sister makes me think about my missing diary... It makes me feel like a snail without a shell even to think about it.”

“My anger’s bubbling away like dad’s beef stew... If you leave a crockpot on the highest setting for long enough, the lid rattles and the pot looks like it might explode. My lid is rattling.”

“I don’t tell Allie that I’m worried that even saying the words aloud might make it real. That asking the question might set off a reaction, like a butterfly flapping its wings in the Amazon, causing a storm in LA.”

“I calculated last week that I spent approximately 89% of my waking hours doing things I didn’t want to do.”

- **Write a guide to or draw a blueprint of your family home**, imagining that you were introducing it to someone who would be staying there. Don’t forget to include any special details or funny quirks that may be unfamiliar to a brand new person! Do any of the doors stick? Is there a great spot to view the neighborhood from a particular window? A perfect nook to hide and read when you need some privacy? Is there a great corner store within walking distance that can’t be missed? Include it all!
- **Discover Bletchley Park!** While in England, Sage discovers that she and her mom have a distant relative who worked as a WWII codebreaker in Bletchley Park. Read more about the amazing minds behind Bletchley Park (particularly the young women!) and make notes about the parts that interest you most. Start at <https://bletchleypark.org.uk/our-story/> for info about codes, life during WWII, a timeline of events, and much much more.
- **Family Takes Many Forms:** Sage’s social studies teacher assigns her class a project to create something to do with family: a painting, a memory box, an interview, or anything else to represent her family story. Create a family project of your choosing!

