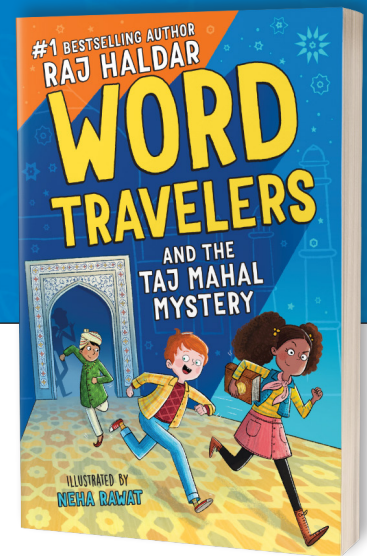


AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE FOR

WORD TRAVELERS AND THE TAJ MAHAL MYSTERY

BY RAJ HALDAR ILLUSTRATED BY NEHA RAWAT



Discussion & Activity Guide for Grades 2, 3, 4 and 5
Prepared by We Love Children's Books

ABOUT THE BOOK

**Explore etymology and world cultures
in the new, exciting, action-packed mystery series from
#1 New York Times bestseller Raj Haldar!**

Eddie and Molly-Jean are next-door neighbors and best friends. One Saturday, Eddie's mom sends him up to the attic to get his great-grandpa's most prized possession (a book, of course). Eddie and MJ are suddenly transported to India, where they must use their word knowledge to help a new friend save his school.

This new series will follow the two best friends as they discover the hidden stories behind common words. Using their Awesome Enchanted Book and a healthy dose of imagination, the daring duo will transport themselves all over the world, encountering new adventures and learning how different cultures have contributed to the English language along the way.



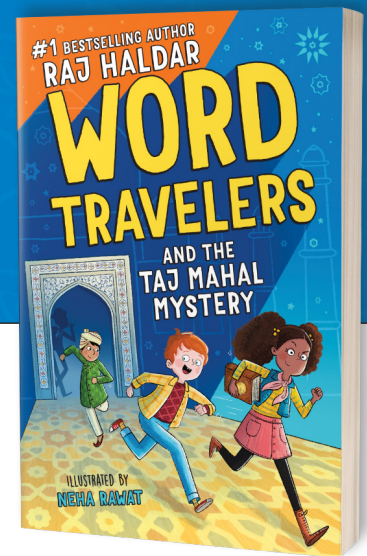
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Better known by his stage name Lushlife, Raj Haldar is an American rapper, composer, and producer from Philadelphia, PA. He's also the #1 New York Times bestselling author of *P Is for Pterodactyl*. Connect with him on Twitter @lushlifemedia.

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PRE-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

This book takes place in modern-day India. During the course of their adventures, our heroes visit a tea plantation, ride in an auto-rickshaw and explore the Taj Mahal. Prepare students for the story they are about to read by providing background information about India, its culture and its people.

This book uses words, their meanings and their origins (or “etymology”) as important parts of the story. Introduce the term “etymology” to the class, discuss what it means and provide some examples.

In *The Mystery of the Taj Mahal Treasure*, after the characters are magically sent to India, they solve riddles to find a treasure. Do students know other books where the characters are drawn into a magical adventure, or where they solve riddles and word-games to figure out a mystery?

Vocabulary

As students read the book, have them write down words they encounter that are unfamiliar to them. Have them derive the meanings from context. Then have them look up the words in the dictionary to confirm the definitions and record the “etymology” or origins of these words. Come together as a class and have students share their lists.

POST READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Frequently Asked Questions

Break students into pairs and have them answer the following questions:

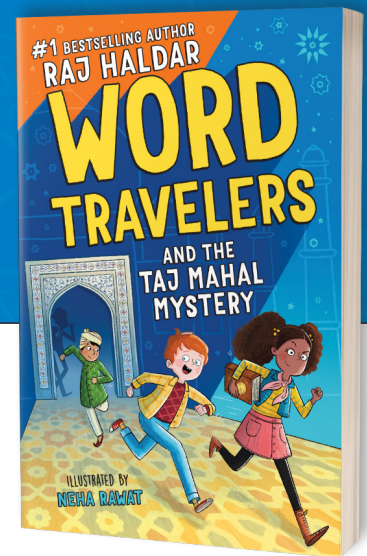
- Who are the main characters in this book?
- Where does the story take place?
- What is the problem or conflict in the story?
- How is the problem resolved?
- What are the “big ideas” or themes of the book?

Come together as a class to discuss their answers and ideas.

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Reading Comprehension

When we read a book, it helps if we can remember some basic facts about the story. Come together as a class and answer these "reading comprehension" questions.

- What is the word that starts MJ and Eddie thinking about word origins?
- How do MJ and Eddie get to India?
- Who wrote the Awesome Enchanted Book?
- What is the name of the study of the origins of words?
- Why is Dev so anxious to find the family treasure?
- Who is the villain who is also trying to get the treasure?
- What is the Sea Palace used for now?
- What sort of plantation do the characters visit?
- Where is the treasure hidden?
- Did the adventure in India really happen? How do we know?

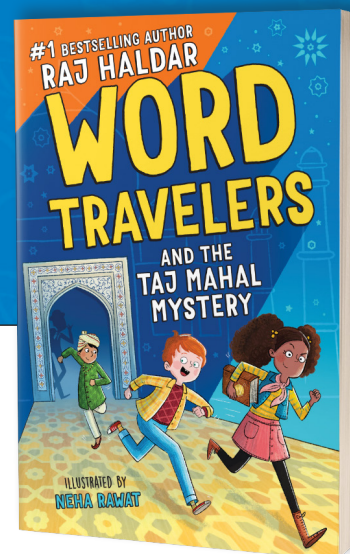
After answering the questions, break students into groups and have each group write five new reading comprehension questions. Stage a quiz event where each group poses their questions to the other groups. Award one point for each correct answer, and crown a champion!

What a Character!

There are four main ways in which an author develops characters: what they look like, what they say, what they do, and what others say about them. Have each student select a character from the book and review the text to create a list of traits, organizing the information into a chart using the four categories above. Come together as a class to discuss and compare the charts. What do students feel is the best way for an author to show readers what a character is like? As a class, make a "Cast of Characters" for the book, listing each character and something about them that stands out. Which of the characters are major? Which are minor?

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The Enemy

In *The Mystery of the Taj Mahal Treasure*, MJ, Eddie and Dev encounter the villainous Geoffrey Raffles and his brother Gerald. What is the conflict between the friends and the Raffles Brothers? At the end of the story, are the Raffles Brothers and Dev still enemies? How do students feel about the Raffles Brothers at the end of the adventure?

Retell the Story

Break the class into pairs and have the students take turns re-telling this story to each other. Next, create small groups of students and have them work together to summarize the book in 15 sentences. Have each group print these sentences on separate strips of paper, mix them up and exchange them with another group. After the groups have put the summary into the correct order, come together as a class to create one master plot summary and discuss it. What parts of the story did each group include? Were any important parts skipped? What events could happen in a different order? How do the plot-points, big and small, fit together to tell the story?

Author Study

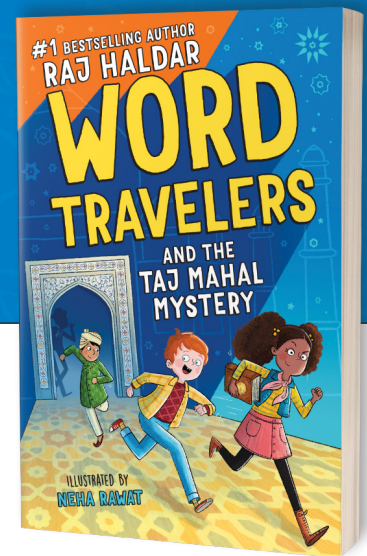
Raj Haldar has written other books besides *The Mystery of the Taj Mahal Treasure*. He is the author of the picture books *P Is for Pterodactyl: The Worst Alphabet Book Ever* and *No Reading Allowed*. Read these books with the class and discuss their similarities and differences. How do these three books reflect the author's interest in language, words and wordplay?

Etymology

Some words in this book are highlighted, and their origins and meanings are featured in the glossary in the back of the book. Have students review these entries and conduct *The Word Travelers Matching Game Challenge*! Make two decks of cards for each student: One deck with the words, one with the etymologies. See who can match all the words to their origins the fastest! Now that they are more familiar with etymology, have students take the next step. At the start of the book, Eddie's mother tells him, "...you'll find a secret story behind almost every word!" Working with an adult if necessary, have students research the etymology of five new words from the book. Include the meaning, the language of origin and the word's history. Have students deliver a brief presentation to the class explaining the

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most interesting word origin they found. One good online source for etymology is: <https://www.etymonline.com/>

Write Away

Here's a fun creative writing project! Have students use as many of the words highlighted in the glossary in their own, completely original, story! Have volunteers read their stories aloud to the class. Who was able to use the most words from the glossary to tell their story? Who wrote the craziest story? The funniest?

Tin Can Phone

At the beginning of the book, Eddie contacts MJ by using a "tin can phone." Inject some Science into your Language Arts class by breaking students into pairs and having them build and experiment with their own Tin Can Phone. Have students record how their phone works under different conditions. How does the phone work with a slack string? A super-tight string? A string wrapped around a corner? What else can students think to try? How clear is the conversation? Come together as a class and review the science behind the Tin Can Phone.

Adventures to Come

The Mystery of the Taj Mahal Treasure sets up the framework for more adventures for Eddie and MJ. What parts of this story let students know this book will have sequels? Have students list other books they have read that are part of a series. Do students prefer reading stand-alone books, or ones that are part of a series? Why?

