SUMMARY

‘That game is too dangerous for children to play!’ says Alan Parrish. Alan Parrish should know. He played the game in 1969 and disappeared! Jumanji is a story for children about a very strange game - a game that becomes far too real and frightening for the players. It was originally a story by Chris Van Allsburg. It was released as a film in 1996, starring the famous American actor Robin Williams.

The story begins in 1869 in New Hampshire, America. Two young brothers bury a box under some trees. They fear that someone will find the box some time - ‘Then God help them,’ says one of the boys. A hundred years later, in 1969, a boy, Alan Parrish, finds the box and takes it home. He’s unhappy; his father wants to send him to boarding school. Alan’s friend Sarah arrives, and they open the box. Inside is a board game. They throw the dice and words appear: ‘Do you want to leave the world behind? Then this is the game for you.’ Suddenly Alan finds that he is disappearing into the game...

The story moves on to 1995. Peter and Judy Shepherd are orphans. They come to live in the same house that Alan Parrish lived in. They find the game, Jumanji, in an attic room, and start to play it; the first throw of the dice unleashes an unexpected sequence of events...

ABOUT CHRIS VAN ALLSBURG

The story Jumanji first appeared as a book by Chris Van Allsburg, published in 1981. It was then transformed into a screen story, and then a screenplay (written for the film, ‘Jumanji’) involving other writers besides Van Allsburg. Finally Todd Strasser wrote a novelization based on the screenplay. The Penguin Readers version of Jumanji is based on this novelization.

Chris Van Allsburg was born in 1949 in Michigan, USA. He was originally an artist and has had numerous individual exhibitions. In 1979 he wrote his first children’s book, The Garden of Abdul Gasazi, and since then he has written over a dozen books for children. Van Allsburg’s illustrations play an important part in all his books.

THEMES IN VAN ALLSBURG’S NOVELS

All Van Allsburg’s books have uncertain boundaries between reality and fantasy, or dream, and contain a puzzle element. The deepest puzzle in his books is - are the events real or are they fantasy? For children, the world of the imagination is very real. The boundaries between the imagination and the real world are not yet firmly in place. The author’s stories make these uncertain boundaries very explicit - his stories are consequently both confusing and exciting.

Van Allsburg’s stories often narrate a quest (a long search). The hero or heroes set out on an adventure that changes them in some way for the better, and teaches them something important. This is an age-old theme, but Van Allsburg, with his blurring of fantasy and reality, succeeds in giving a brilliant new twist to it.

ABOUT THE FILM

‘Jumanji’, released in 1996, has been highly successful. It is an entertaining, action-packed movie. The fantasy sequences involving jungle scenes were created using computer-generated imagery, giving the film breathtaking special effects! Robin Williams, who plays Alan, has great charisma and a crazy, out-of-control humour that appeals to all ages. He also has a vulnerability that enables him to play children very successfully. A twist in the film is that the same actor plays the hunter Van Pelt and Alan’s father. The suggestion here is that because his father intends to send Alan to boarding school, Alan feels betrayed, and even ‘persecuted’ by him. In the world of ‘Jumanji’, where fantasy and reality are all tangled up, Van Pelt persecutes Alan in the same way.

JUMANJI: THEMES

Jumanji takes the world of the imagination and then shows how this fantasy world invades the real world, causing danger and chaos. How can this happen, the reader asks? But the narrative is so convincing that the reader believes it really is happening. The story becomes extremely gripping as a consequence.
The story has a deeper meaning too. Through his adventures Alan learns something very important - that if you confront your fears your problems will go away. Alan turns to face Van Pelt, the hunter who is trying to kill him. In doing so, he completes the game and can return to reality; he finds that his father is not going to send him to boarding school after all.

*Jumanji* has other levels to it. One of these is the ‘time’ theme. In *Jumanji*, time is ‘elastic’. Alan travels back and forwards through time. When he finally arrives back in 1969, having put everything right, then the possible disastrous future is altered. The film director Steven Spielberg’s *Back to the Future* films play with time in the same way. Top scientists even tell us now that time travel is theoretically possible!

Another theme is the ‘boy in a man’s body’ theme. Alan appears in 1995, in a thirty-eight-year-old body, but with a twelve-year-old mind! This is a fascinating, amusing idea. But above all, *Jumanji* is an adventure story, full of the thrills and spills that keep the reader turning the pages to find out what happens next. Teenagers will enjoy it enormously.

### Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader, and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student’s Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of discussion and pair/groupwork questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

#### ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Photocopy the pictures and their captions on pages 4, 11, 24 and 31. Separate the pictures from their captions. Photocopy the four pictures all together on one page, and the four captions on another page, not in the same order as the pictures. Put students in small groups and give each group a page of pictures and a page of captions. Ask students to:

(a) put the captions with the right pictures
(b) try to build the story from the pictures and the captions

#### ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

**Chapters 1-3**

1. Put students into pairs. Ask them to think about what happened to Alan when he was in the game. They then write his story. Tell students again that Alan was away for twenty-six years.
2. Put students into pairs. They are Peter and Judy at the end of Chapter 3. Alan leaves them. What do they say?

**Chapters 4-7**

1. Put students in pairs. Ask them to do the following:
   (a) Write down the animals in these chapters. Then they check their answers by looking at the book.
   (b) Say which animal in the story they are most afraid of and why.
   (c) Say which animal in the story they like best and why.

2. Teach the words imagine and magic. In pairs, students talk about these questions.
   (a) Who do you think made this game?
   (b) Why do you think this person (or people) made it?
   (c) Imagine you can make a magic game. Write about this game.

**Chapters 8-10**

1. Find the words pair and rhyme in your dictionary. Then do these exercises.
   (a) There are four pairs of rhyming lines in Chapter 8. They are not in the right places here. Put the four pairs together again.
   (i) Sometimes it’s back that you must go.
   (ii) An animal? No, the house is breaking!
   (iii) Want a hand? Well, you wait!
   (iv) Look! The floor! You’re falling through it!
   (b) What does each pair of rhyming lines mean?
   (2) In pairs, students decide on new pictures for these chapters and write a description of them.

#### ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Put students into pairs. Ask them to write the story of each chapter in three or four sentences, no more. Then students put their sentences in the wrong order. They give their sentences to another pair. This pair has to put the sentences in the right order again. Ask pairs to read out their sentences in the right order.

### Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the ‘Before You Read’ sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

#### Chapters 1-3

- **bite** (v) to put your teeth into somebody or something
- **bury** (v) to put something in the ground
- **crash** (n) a loud noise
- **drop** (v) to fall from your hands
- **glass** (n) this is hard and you can see through it; you make windows with it
- **hole** (n) an opening in something
- **machine** (n) this thing does the work of people
- **refrigerator** (n) this cupboard is cold and keeps food cold
- **scream** (v) to cry loudly because you are afraid
- **surprised** (adj) when something happens and it was not a plan, you are surprised

#### Chapters 4-7

- **broken** (adj) not working because someone or something has hit it
- **cheat** (v) to do something in a game when you know it is a bad thing to do
Look up dice, unusual and bury in your dictionary. Then read the Introduction in your book. Find the mistakes in these sentences.

In the year 1868, in a small town in New England, USA, three young brothers bury a dangerous game. The game is called ‘Jumanji’, and they bury it in a hole under some trees. The boys are afraid.

'Somebody could find it,' says the older boy. 'Then God help them!' says his brother.

Somebody does find the game - fifty years later! And with the second throw of the dice, something unusual happens. But this is only the beginning . . .

Twenty-five years later, somebody must finish that game! And when two children - Peter and Jane - find the Jumanji box, strange things start to happen again.

The Introduction says, ‘Something unusual happens with the first throw of the dice’. What do you think happens?

1. Complete these sentences.
   (a) The boys threw a ......................... into the hole.
   (b) The younger boy fell into the ......................... .
   (c) A ......................... came from inside the box.
   (d) '......................... I!' said the younger boy.
   (e) ‘No!’ said his brother. ‘We must ......................... it!’
   (f) 'Somebody could ......................... it,' said the younger boy.
   (g) 'Then God ......................... them,' said his brother.

2. Work with another student. Talk about this question.
   Why do you think the boys are afraid?

Chapter 1

1. Which answer is right?
   (a) Alan Parrish's father owns a (i) shoe factory. (ii) bike factory.
   (b) Alan wants his father to take him home (i) because he is tired. (ii) because he is frightened of Billy Jessup and his friends.
   (c) The five boys hit and kick Alan because (i) he talked to Billy Jessup's girlfriend. (ii) he took Billy's bike.
   (d) Alan finds a box with the word ‘Jumanji’ on it (i) next to his bike. (ii) in a hole.

2. Answer these questions.
   (a) What do we learn about Alan Parrish in this chapter?
   (b) Why do you think the box makes a noise?

Chapter 2

1. Finish these sentences. Use these words:
   dangerous, afraid, angry, small, kind
   (a) Alan feels ......................... with his father.
   (b) Sarah is a ......................... girl.
   (c) Jumanji is a ......................... game.
   (d) Alan suddenly becomes very ......................... .
   (e) Sarah is ......................... of the bats.

2. Work with another student. Answer these questions.
   (a) What strange things happen in this chapter?
   (b) What do you think happens to Alan?
   (c) What do you think Sarah does next?

Chapter 3

1. Put the words together and make sentences from the story.
   (a) Peter and Judy's parents died
   (b) Alan Parrish went away
   (c) The two tokens jump
   (d) The mosquitos
   (e) The lion
   (f) The man is
   (g) The policeman is
   (h) The monkeys
   (i) jumps at Peter and Judy.
   (ii) Alan Parrish.
   (iii) take the policeman's gun.
   (iv) Carl Bentley.
   (v) are as big as small birds.
   (vi) twenty-six years ago.
   (vii) in a car accident in Canada.
   (viii) out of Peter's hand.

2. These numbers are in Chapter 3. Why?
   (a) 26, (b) 3 and 5, (c) 12, (d) 38, (e) 1995, (f) 2

3. Answer this question.
   What is strange about Alan when he comes back from inside the game?

Chapter 4

1. Answer these questions.
   (a) Where does Alan go?
   (b) What happened to his parents?
   (c) Why doesn't Alan want to play the game again?
   (d) Why does Alan look for Sarah Whittle?
   (e) What happens to Sarah when she sees Alan?

2. Work with another student. Make Alan and Sarah's conversation when they meet again.
Chapter 5
1 Finish these sentences.
(a) 'Twenty-six years ago we started something and now we must ...................................................... .'
(b) Down came the knife - and cut the .......................................................... .
(c) This man from the jungle has .......................................................... .
(d) Twenty or more rhinoceroses ran .......................................................... .
(e) The bird had the board game .......................................................... .
2 Answer these questions.
(a) What do you know about Van Pelt?
(b) Why do you think Van Pelt wants to kill Alan?
Chapter 6
Finish these sentences.
(a) Judy says Peter is clever because .......................................................... .
(b) Alan goes with Bentley to the police station because .......................................................... .
(c) The children must finish the game because .......................................................... .
(d) The token goes back to the beginning of the game because .......................................................... .
(e) Peter grows thick, dark hair on his hands because .......................................................... .
Chapter 7
1 Make sentences about the story with these words.
(a) Peter/monkey
(b) dangerous animals/town
(c) an elephant/car
(d) Van Pelt/game/Peter
(e) Peter/Van Pelt's leg
(f) Alan/police car/shop's front window
(g) rain/house
(h) Alan/water/crocodiles
2 Write a letter from Carl Bentley to a friend. Tell your friend about Alan and the animals in the town.
Chapter 8
1 What happens first? What happens second? Write a number from 1-9 next to each sentence.
(a) Twenty or thirty big spiders come into the room.
(b) Alan starts to fall through the floor.
(c) Alan says 'Jumanji'.
(d) The floor breaks open.
(e) The token moves to the finish.
(f) The water goes down.
(g) Van Pelt is going to kill Alan.
(h) One of the dice falls down the hole.
(i) Sarah's arms are in the floor and she cannot move them.
2 Work with another student. Talk about these questions.
(a) Why do you think the token moves to the finish at the end of the chapter?
(b) At the end of the chapter there are the words, 'K-BOOM!' What do you think happens?
Chapter 9
1 Answer these questions.
(a) What year is it?
(b) How do things change?
(c) How is Alan different with his father?
(d) What does Alan learn from the game?
(e) What happened to Peter and Judy?
(f) What do Alan and Sarah do with the box?
(g) What do you think Sarah wants to do?
2 Work with another student. Make the conversation between Peter and his father when they meet.
Chapter 10
1 Read this and put right the mistakes.
It is 1995 and Alan is forty years old. He has a shoe shop. He is married to Lucy and his parents live in England. Alan and Lucy are having a Christmas party. There are two people there called John and Martha Smith. They have two children called Judy and Michael. Jim and Martha are thinking about going to Mexico for a holiday. Alan and Lucy say, 'Don’t go! We want you to work in our shop.'
2 Answer these questions.
(a) Why do Alan and Sarah invite Martha and Jim Shepherd to their party?
(b) Why do Alan and Sarah want Jim and Martha Shepherd to start work at the shoe factory as soon as they can?
(c) Why do Alan and Sarah smile at the end of the story?
Activities after reading the book
1 Who changes the future in this book? How?
2 Find the answers to these sentences. The first letter of each answer makes a word. What is the word?
(a) Peter's sister.
(b) Peter and Judy tell Carl Bentley that Alan is their .......................................................... .
(c) These animals broke plates in the kitchen.
(d) Nora is Peter and Judy's ...................................................... .
(e) A dice has on it.
(f) Lions sometimes live in the .......................................................... .
(g) Sarah says, 'There's something want to do.'