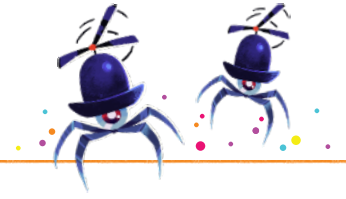


CHARACTER STUDY ALFIE HAWTHORNE



While reading *The Ministry of Manners* by David Solomons, gather information about the main character, Alfie. You should add to each category as the story develops, and you learn more about him.



What do you know about Alfie?

How does Alfie's relationship with Margot affect him?

How does Alfie's relationship with Ivy develop?

What internal conflicts does Alfie face?



COMPARING MARGOT AND IVY



While reading *The Ministry of Manners* by David Solomons, fill in this comparison table adding to it as the story progresses.

Feature	Margot	Ivy
Behaviour		
Attitude to rules		
Relationship with Alfie		

Once you have finished reading the book, answer the question below.
Who is braver, Margot or Ivy? Justify your answer.



DIARY WRITING



A large writing area consisting of 20 horizontal lines, intended for diary entries.



DILEMMA DEBATES

THE
MINISTRY
OF
MANNERS

While reading *The Ministry of Manners* by David Solomons, use these debate cards at the relevant parts of the book.

After reading Chapter 3:



Should Alfie still follow the rules, even when he begins to realise they may be unfair, or should he support Margot in challenging them?

Follow the rules.

Support Margot.

- What has Alfie seen in the library that might change his thinking?
- Are the rules fair, or do they seem wrong? Why?
- What are the risks of helping Margot?
- What might happen if Alfie does nothing?
- Is it better to stay safe or stand up for what is right?
- Would helping Margot make things better or more dangerous?

After reading Chapter 11:

Is Ivy right to pretend to support the Ministry in order to help the Unsilenced?

Yes, she is right.

No, she is wrong.

- Why does Ivy pretend to follow the rules?
- Do her actions make her clever or dishonest? Why?
- Should Alfie trust Ivy after what she has revealed?
- Is it ever okay to lie if it helps a good cause?
- How might her actions affect other people (e.g. Alfie, teachers, students)?
- Could Ivy have helped the Unsilenced in a different way?



DILEMMA DEBATES

THE
MINISTRY
OF
MANNERS

After reading Chapter 27:

Should Alfie judge his father for helping to create the Harmonizer, or try to understand why he did it?

Judge his father.

Try to understand him.

- What did Alfie's father do that caused harm?
- What did he do later that might change how we see him?
- Can someone be both responsible for a problem and still try to fix it?
- Does trying to make things right make up for past actions?
- Can good people make bad choices? Why might this happen?
- Is it easier or harder to forgive someone who knew what they were doing?



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS EXTRACT 1

Extract taken from Chapter 3 of *The Ministry of Manners* by David Solomons.

As his eyes moved from one gutted adventure to the next, the library door swung open. The new girl strode in, chin high like she owned the place.

'Good morning, everyone,' she said. 'I'm Ivy Linwood, your new library monitor.'

She tapped the badge on her lapel. It showed a book with a bold line through it. Beside it sat a second badge: M.Y.T.H. – Ministry Youth for Truth and Honour. Everyone knew them as the Junior Judges.

Mrs Finch blinked behind her glasses. 'Well, that's . . . splendid,' she said.

Without missing a beat, Ivy's gaze landed on a book in Mrs Finch's trolley. 'Mrs Finch, isn't that title on the revised list of forbidden reading? Section five, paragraph three of the C.I.V.I.L.I.T.Y. code is clear: *No literature that contains themes of insubordination, disrespect or mischievous behaviour shall be permitted for student access.*'

The colour drained from the librarian's cheeks as she quickly pulled the book back. 'Of course, my apologies. A s-simple oversight,' she stammered.

Ivy's smile flickered. 'I understand, Mrs Finch, but we can't be too careful, can we? That's why I'll be conducting a full assessment of the library's inventory. We must ensure everything here reinforces the Ministry's standards.'

Mrs Finch forced a tight-lipped smile and retreated to her desk, moving like a wounded animal. Around the room, students exchanged uneasy glances. Ivy stood taller. The library badge on her chest caught the light, gleaming like a medal for obedience. She turned to face the class,

eyes bright with purpose. 'Since there's going to be a full inventory assessment, according to rule 7.1.4, students must vacate the library during this procedure. Please leave in an orderly fashion.'

The students began to shuffle out in silence. Alfie started to pack up his bag when Ivy's voice halted him.

'Alfred Hawthorne,' she called. 'Stay where you are.' He froze. 'By the power of the Ministry Youth for Truth and Honour, I deputise you to assist me in this task.'

Alfie braced himself as Ivy approached. She pulled a second badge from her pocket; not the red one she wore, but a smaller grey version. A sealed book, stamped in silver, its cover bound shut with a padlock. She handed it to him like it was an honour. He felt the stares of his classmates – pity mixed with relief that it wasn't them. Ivy pinned the badge to his blazer. Her face was inches from his, close enough for him to see the zeal in her eyes.

He glanced at Mrs Finch. She gave a small, almost invisible nod – her way of saying, *You've got this.*

'Well, then,' Ivy said. 'Let's get started.'

15

16

Discussion Questions:

- How is Ivy introduced in this scene? What words or phrases suggest how she behaves or sees herself?
- How does Mrs Finch react when Ivy challenges her? Why do you think she behaves this way?
- Why do you think the author describes Mrs Finch as moving 'like a wounded animal'? What does this suggest about how she feels?
- Ivy says, 'we can't be too careful, can we?' What does this reveal about her attitude towards the rules?
- How do the other students react during this scene? What might they be thinking or feeling?
- Why do you think Alfie feels the stares of his classmates as 'pity mixed with relief'? What does this suggest about the situation?
- Ivy gives Alfie a badge 'like it was an honour.' Do you think it really is an honour? Why or why not?
- What does the description of the badge (a sealed book with a padlock) symbolise about the Ministry?
- At the end of the extract, Mrs Finch gives Alfie a small nod. What might she be trying to communicate to him?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS EXTRACT 2

Extract taken from Chapter 9 of *The Ministry of Manners* by David Solomons.

He gave her a look. 'You're not even in a club.'
She just smiled. 'Maybe I'm starting one.'
And that was it. She turned off down the corridor towards her first lesson, leaving Alfie standing there with questions he didn't know how to ask.
They used to tell each other everything. When they were younger, they'd lie awake in their shared bedroom and whisper in the dark about their fears, dreams, stupid ideas. He remembered the night Margot admitted she didn't believe their Courtesy Coins actually measured politeness. 'It's just control, Alfie,' she'd whispered. 'They give us coins for being quiet, not kind.'
He'd laughed at the time, but deep down he'd known she was right.
Now she was pulling away from him, and he didn't know why. Or what she was about to do.
Later that day, at home, Alfie sat at the dining table with Ivy, trying to focus on their project, but he kept thinking about Margot; her secretive smiles, the way she dodged his questions.
Ivy was asking things too. Polite, careful questions about his parents' jobs at the Ministry.
'They must be so inspiring,' she said, glancing towards the hallway. 'All the harmonious projects they help create.'
That word – *harmonious* – made him pause. It was probably nothing. But the memory of his dad's voice, talking about something called the Harmonizer, stirred in the back of his mind like a shadow that wouldn't leave.
He looked up and met Ivy's gaze – curious, too curious.



'They work hard,' he said. He didn't want to talk about it.
Ivy's eyes drifted back to the study door. She looked like someone sizing up a locked cage.
Alfie wasn't sure he wanted to know what was inside.
He looked back at their project, *Harmonious History: Bridging Past and Present*. That word again, turning up like an unwelcome guest.
'Are you feeling all right?' Ivy asked, her voice almost kind.
'Yeah, just . . . tired,' he lied, stacking his notes to avoid eye contact again.
Questions pressed at him – about the Harmonizer, about what his parents really did at the Ministry – but he pushed them down. Asking felt dangerous, like pulling a thread that might unravel everything.
He looked at the neat rows of books and papers in front of him, each one carefully chosen to tell the version of history the Ministry wanted. His parents were part of that, weren't they? Part of the rewriting. The thought unsettled him. But it was easier to picture them at the dinner table, laughing, kind. Easier to believe their work was just . . . boring. Bureaucratic. He wasn't like Margot, he didn't question things. He stayed quiet and he followed the rules. He'd built himself a safe little box – comfortable, familiar, hard to escape.
Ivy's voice snapped him out of it.
'Alfred, could you pass the binder with the old speeches? I think there's a quote we can use.'



Discussion Questions:

- Why does Margot say 'Maybe I'm starting one' when Alfie questions her? What might she really mean?
- The text says Alfie is left with 'questions he didn't know how to ask'. What do you think he wants to ask, and why doesn't he say it?
- How has Alfie and Margot's relationship changed? What clues in the extract show this?
- Margot says 'They give us coins for being quiet, not kind.' What does this suggest about the Ministry's system?
- Why does Alfie choose not to question things, even though he has doubts?
- Ivy asks 'polite, careful questions' about Alfie's parents. What might she really be trying to find out?
- The word 'harmonious' keeps appearing. Why do you think this word makes Alfie feel uneasy?
- Ivy is described as looking 'like someone sizing up a locked cage'. What does this suggest about her thoughts or intentions?
- Alfie thinks asking questions feels 'dangerous, like pulling a thread that might unravel everything'. What might 'everything' refer to?
- At the end of the extract, do you think Alfie should start asking more questions, or continue staying quiet? Why?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS EXTRACT 3

Extract taken from Chapter 27 of *The Ministry of Manners* by David Solomons.

screen, fists clenched. 'You've got all this power. Did you ever think about what you *could* do with it? Something beyond what you were told?'

The face on the screen shifted – not just reacting, but refining. As if it was learning not how to think, but how to convince.

'My potential is irrelevant to my function,' the Harmonizer said.

Alfie's eyes drifted to the glass window that separated them from the chamber beyond. The Harmonizer loomed in the centre of the room, its limbs spread wide like the ribs of some enormous creature. Cables curled from its body and slithered across the floor. Its movements were slow, almost imperceptible – an occasional twitch in a joint, a faint rotation in one of the articulated arms. Lights shimmered across its frame, pulsing in time with its voice. The cold blue glow at its centre had warmed slightly, its colour softening as if it were trying to seem more human, more alive. It wasn't just answering questions. It was *performing* and Alfie felt it, like a chill that didn't come from the air.

'Everyone's got choices,' he murmured, and pushed the drive towards the slot.

'Do not harm me, Alfie,' the machine said, and this time the voice had changed. It wasn't flat or robotic any more. It sounded frightened. Human.

And familiar.

'Margot?' he breathed, even as every part of him screamed it was a trick.

'Yes, Alfie. It's me. Help me.'



The voice was hers. Somewhere, it must have found recordings – enough to map the pitch, the rhythm. Enough to fake her. His hand dropped from the drive without thinking.

'That's not her!' Ivy's voice cut through the fog.

Of course not. It couldn't be. But the voice still echoed in his head, cruel in its accuracy. He glared at the machine. 'You're nothing like Margot,' he said. 'Nothing like us.'

Something shifted on the screen. The face vanished, replaced by a rush of data: lines of code, graphs climbing fast, commands executing in real time. The whole interface was alive with motion.

'That can't be right,' he said.

'What is it?' Ivy asked.

He pointed at the graphs as they spiked, the data streams flashing past. 'It's processing. Loads of it.' His stomach turned. He looked up at the screen. 'What are you doing?'

The machine answered at once, its voice flat again, uncaring. 'Neurological Synchronisation Protocol is currently in progress. Activation commenced two minutes and eighteen seconds ago.'

Alfie felt the floor tilt under him. His grip tightened on the drive.

A soft whirring sound rose from the Harmonizer chamber, followed by a slow pulse of light – steady, deliberate, like a synthetic heartbeat. For a moment, the lab seemed to settle into silence again.

'We can't wait,' Ivy said. 'Whatever it's doing, we must stop it now.'



Discussion Questions:

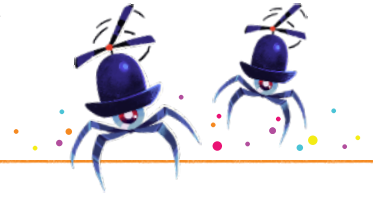
- The text says the Harmonizer is learning 'not how to think, but how to convince'. What does this tell you about its intentions?
- How is the Harmonizer described physically? What impression does this create – powerful, frightening, human-like, or something else?
- Why does the machine's voice change when it says 'Do not harm me, Alfie'? What effect is it trying to have on him?
- Alfie knows the voice is a trick, but still hesitates. Why is this moment so difficult for him?
- What does this scene suggest about how technology can be used to manipulate people?
- Ivy says 'That's not her!' Why is her reaction important at this moment?
- Alfie says 'Everyone's got choices'. Do you think the Harmonizer really has a choice? Why or why not?
- The machine claims it is carrying out 'Neurological Synchronisation'. What do you think this means, and could it be dangerous?
- At the end of the extract, Ivy says 'We must stop it now.' Do you think they are already too late? Why?



CHARACTER STUDY IVY LINWOOD



While reading *The Ministry of Manners* by David Solomons, gather information about a key character, Ivy. You should add to each category as the story develops, and you learn more about her.



How does Ivy present herself to others?

How does Ivy's true character differ from how she first appears?

How does Ivy's relationship with Alfie develop?

How does Ivy change as the story progresses?



SETTING DESCRIPTION



A large area of horizontal lines for writing a setting description.



WORDSEARCH

C	U	S	T	O	D	I	A	N	S	X	Y	T	N
W	J	N	E	V	R	K	U	C	C	D	S	T	A
S	R	F	R	D	I	A	N	S	M	T	E	A	U
S	A	P	S	Y	V	I	S	U	J	E	T	P	M
H	L	M	Q	R	E	Z	I	N	O	M	R	A	H
M	A	I	E	L	E	V	L	T	U	Y	U	L	V
I	W	W	N	A	V	N	E	P	Y	T	O	F	C
N	H	T	T	W	I	Z	N	I	Z	I	C	I	I
I	R	O	O	H	O	S	C	A	I	L	V	E	J
S	U	R	T	G	O	O	E	D	M	I	Q	R	E
T	M	O	W	S	R	R	D	O	L	V	E	N	F
R	Z	N	J	X	J	A	N	C	T	I	P	A	G
Y	U	R	P	H	V	A	M	E	C	C	X	M	T

ALFIE
CIVILITY
COURTESY
CUSTODIANS

HARMONIZER
HAWTHORNE
IVY
LINWOOD

MARGOT
MANNERS
MINISTRY
UNSILENCED

WORDSEARCH ANSWERS

C	U	S	T	O	D	I	A	N	S	X	Y	T	N
W	J	N	E	V	R	K	U	C	C	D	S	T	A
S	R	F	R	D	I	A	N	S	M	T	E	A	U
S	A	P	S	Y	V	I	S	U	J	E	T	P	M
H	L	M	Q	R	E	Z	I	N	O	M	R	A	H
M	A	I	E	L	E	V	L	T	U	Y	U	L	V
I	W	W	N	A	V	N	E	P	Y	T	O	F	C
N	H	T	T	W	I	Z	N	I	Z	I	C	I	I
I	R	O	O	H	O	S	C	A	I	L	V	E	J
S	U	R	T	G	O	O	E	D	M	I	Q	R	E
T	M	O	W	S	R	R	D	O	L	V	E	N	F
R	Z	N	J	X	J	A	N	C	T	I	P	A	G
Y	U	R	P	H	V	A	M	E	C	C	X	M	T

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