**Escape Room Activity: Breaking the Curse of the Lost Coin**

**The Haunted Chronicles**

**Age Level**: 9-13

**Time Required**: 45-60 minutes  
**Group Size**: 4-6 students per group  
**Objective**: Work together to solve puzzles and find clues to “break the curse” and escape the cursed town within the time limit.

**Supplies Needed:**

1. **Printed Clue Cards** (see below for details on each clue).
2. **Envelopes** (to hide the clues).
3. **Locks and Lockboxes** (combination or key locks for the lockboxes where clues are hidden).
4. **Keys** (to open locked items).
5. **Flashlights** (optional, to add atmosphere and require students to search for clues in dark areas).
6. **Fake Coin or Replica Coin** (to represent the cursed coin in the final step).
7. **Clock/Timer** (to time the escape room activity).
8. **Blacklight Pen/Invisible Ink Pen** (for writing hidden messages on some clues that can only be seen with blacklight).
9. **Book-related decorations** (optional, to set the atmosphere: posters of abandoned towns, old-looking artifacts, etc.).

**Setting Up:**

* Divide the classroom or space into “stations” or “rooms” representing key locations from *Curse of the Lost Coin*. Each room should have a puzzle or clue leading to the next location or piece of the puzzle. The last room leads to the "Collector's Tomb" where the final solution (destroying the coin) takes place.
* Set up each station with its clues hidden in lockboxes or behind locks, requiring students to solve puzzles to proceed.

**Escape Room Storyline:**

The students are stuck in the forgotten town, where a cursed coin has taken hold. They must uncover the secrets of the town by solving clues, unlocking the coin’s history, and breaking the curse before time runs out—or they will be trapped forever!

**Clue Breakdown:**

1. **Clue 1: The Forgotten Town Map**  
   **Objective**: Begin the journey.  
   **Clue**: Provide students with a map of the "forgotten town," showing key locations where clues can be found. The map could include places like the abandoned town hall, the ruins, and the cemetery.  
   **Setup**: Hide the map in a locked box. To unlock it, students must use a combination based on the first letter of each character’s name in the book:
   * Theo (T), Millie (M), Jacob (J) = TMJ (three-digit lock).
2. **Clue 2: The Coin’s Symbols**  
   **Objective**: Identify the cursed coin.  
   **Clue**: A puzzle showing a series of strange symbols similar to those found on the cursed coin. Students must match each symbol with its meaning by referencing a decoder or key provided on the back of the clue.  
   **Setup**: Hide this clue in a separate envelope with a hidden message written in invisible ink. Students must use a blacklight to reveal the instruction: "Match the symbols to reveal the next number.”  
   **Solution**: Once the symbols are matched, they will reveal the code (e.g., 325) to open the next lock.
3. **Clue 3: The Collector’s Riddle**  
   **Objective**: Solve a riddle to progress.  
   **Clue**: “I take, but never give. I grant, but at a cost. Who am I?”  
   **Answer**: The Collector.  
   **Setup**: Students must write the answer (The Collector) on a whiteboard or paper to receive the next clue from the teacher. If they answer correctly, they receive the key to open the next lockbox.
4. **Clue 4: The Cemetery’s Puzzle**  
   **Objective**: Unlock the secret in the cemetery.  
   **Clue**: A torn letter found at the cemetery, which is written backwards or scrambled. Students need to piece together the letter to reveal a message: “Return the coin to the tomb.”  
   **Setup**: The letter can be written in pieces and scattered around the room for students to find and assemble. Alternatively, it could be encoded and need a decoder (like a Caesar cipher) to unlock.
5. **Clue 5: The Final Stand – The Curse’s Price**  
   **Objective**: Break the curse.  
   **Clue**: The students must make a choice to "sacrifice" someone to break the curse, mirroring the themes of the story. Place the final clue in a box labeled "The Collector’s Tomb."  
   **Setup**: Inside the box, place a replica of the cursed coin and a note that says, “To break the curse, one must sacrifice the coin and their desire for luck.”  
   **Solution**: Students must decide to destroy the coin by agreeing to symbolically “sacrifice” it to break the curse. Once they make the choice, they win the game and break the curse.

**Winning the Game:**

To escape and win, students must solve all puzzles and “destroy” the coin by placing it back in a final lockbox, symbolizing the end of the curse. Time stops when they complete this step.

**Debrief Questions (Post-Activity):**

1. **What was the most challenging puzzle, and how did you solve it?**
2. **How did the clues relate to the events in *Curse of the Lost Coin*?**
3. **What did you learn about teamwork while solving the puzzles?**
4. **In the book, the characters face consequences for using the coin. How does that theme of choices and consequences apply to the decisions you made in the escape room?**
5. **If you had found the real cursed coin, what would you have done differently from Theo?**

**Adaptations for Different Age Groups:**

* **Younger students (9-10)**: Simplify the puzzles and clues by removing complex decoders or ciphers, and use more visual or matching-based tasks.
* **Older students (12-13)**: Make puzzles more complex with additional steps, or integrate more challenging logic or math-based clues.

**Atmosphere and Immersion:**

* Dim the lights and provide flashlights to enhance the eerie atmosphere.
* Play soft, creepy background music or forest sounds to set the tone.
* Decorate the classroom with items like faux vines, “ruins” made from cardboard, and old-looking books or props to create the feeling of the forgotten town.