**Escape Room Activity: Escape the Haunted Dollhouse**

*The Haunted Chronicles: The Haunted Dollhouse*

**Grade Level: Age 9-13**

**Time: 60-90 minutes**

**Objective:**

Students will work in small groups to solve puzzles and unlock clues that will help them "escape" the haunted dollhouse and break the curse. The activity encourages teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, all while reinforcing key plot elements from *The Haunted Dollhouse*.

**Setup:**

Create a classroom environment that simulates an escape room. Each group will have a series of challenges to solve that revolve around the key events in *The Haunted Dollhouse*. Students will need to solve all the puzzles to unlock the final "escape" clue and break the curse. You can use props, envelopes, printed materials, and simple locks for added realism.

**Materials:**

* Printed puzzles and clues (provided in the guide)
* Envelopes for each puzzle clue
* A box with a lock (optional for final clue)
* Timer (to create urgency)
* Decorations (optional): Dim the lights, use spooky sound effects, and have props like small dollhouse furniture to create a haunted atmosphere.
* Prizes (optional): Certificates of completion, small prizes for groups that "escape"

**Instructions for Teachers:**

1. **Introduction (5 minutes)**:
   * Set the scene: Tell the students they have entered a haunted dollhouse, just like Lily and Emma did in *The Haunted Dollhouse*. Their goal is to solve the puzzles, break the curse, and escape before time runs out. If they solve all the clues, they will "break the curse" and free Luna's spirit.
2. **Group Setup**:
   * Divide students into small groups (3-5 students per group). Each group works together to solve the puzzles and escape.
   * Give each group a clipboard with paper and pencils for notes.

**Puzzle 1: The Mysterious Doll Clue**

*Objective*: Use the dolls to decode a message.

**Instructions**:

* Provide a photo or drawing of the dollhouse’s dining room scene, with the four dolls sitting around the table (just like in the book).
* Each doll has a letter associated with it (e.g., D, O, L, L), and their positions correspond to numbers.
* Students must decode the correct word from the letters to unlock the next clue.

**Clue**: The dolls spell the word **"LUNA"**, revealing the name of the trapped spirit in the dollhouse.

**What Students Need to Do**:

* Rearrange the letters from the dolls in the right order to discover Luna's name.

**Puzzle 2: The Haunted Room Riddle**

*Objective*: Solve the riddle to unlock the next room.

**Riddle** (placed inside an envelope with a photo of a spooky room): *"I stand tall in shadows but crumble in light.  
I hide in the attic but flee from your sight.  
What am I?"*

**Answer**: **A shadow**

**What Students Need to Do**:

* Discuss the clues and figure out that the answer is "shadow," unlocking the next part of the dollhouse—the attic.

**Puzzle 3: The Hidden Key Code**

*Objective*: Use a key code to find the next clue hidden in a journal page.

**Instructions**:

* Provide students with a “journal page” from Great-Aunt Helen (this can be handwritten or printed). The page contains a series of numbers, such as "7-4-9," hidden in the margins.
* There’s also a message saying, “The key to the next clue is hidden in the numbers.”

**Clue**: Students must use the numbers to find corresponding letters in the journal entry (for example, the 7th letter, 4th letter, and 9th letter in the first sentence spell out the next word).

**What Students Need to Do**:

* Using the number code, they will spell out the word **"CURSE"** to reveal that they need to break the curse.

**Puzzle 4: The Haunted Mirror Puzzle**

*Objective*: Solve a reflective puzzle to reveal the next clue.

**Instructions**:

* Hand out a mirror or reflective surface and a scrambled phrase printed backward.
* The message reads: **"Break the mirror to escape the dollhouse."**

**What Students Need to Do**:

* Hold the backward text in front of the mirror to reveal the clue, which tells them they need to "break" the mirror (symbolically) to escape.

**Puzzle 5: The Final Lock – Key to the Dollhouse**

*Objective*: Find the final key and escape.

**Instructions**:

* Place a small lock on a box that contains the final escape clue (if no lock is available, students can simply be given a final envelope).
* Inside the box/envelope, place a key or picture of a key with a note that reads, "This is the key to breaking the curse. Use it wisely."
* The final clue should guide them toward solving the escape challenge: **"Place the key near the dollhouse, and speak the name of the trapped spirit."**

**What Students Need to Do**:

* The students must remember that the trapped spirit’s name is **Luna**, place the key near the dollhouse, and say her name aloud. This "breaks the curse" and allows them to escape.

**Optional Challenge:**

For added difficulty, include a time limit for each puzzle, or have each group "unlock" a physical clue (like keys or combination locks) before moving on to the next stage.

**Reflection and Debrief (10 minutes):**

* After completing the escape room activity, gather the students and discuss:
  + What were the hardest and easiest puzzles?
  + How did working as a team help solve the challenges?
  + What parts of the book came alive for you through this escape room?
  + How would you have solved the mystery if you were in Lily and Emma’s shoes?
* Encourage students to reflect on the themes of teamwork, friendship, and bravery from *The Haunted Dollhouse* and how they used those same qualities to solve the escape room challenge.

**Extensions:**

1. **Creative Writing**: Have students write an alternate ending where they didn’t escape in time—what might have happened if the curse wasn’t broken?
2. **Art Project**: Students can create their own haunted dollhouses using cardboard boxes, markers, and materials.