**Escape Room Activity: The Vanishing Window Challenge**

***The Haunted Chronicles***

**Objective:**
Students work together to solve puzzles, find clues, and "trap" the reflection back into the window before it escapes completely. This escape room is designed for 9–13-year-olds and can be adapted for classrooms, libraries, or youth programs.

**Setting the Scene:**

Participants are in Grace’s room, facing the same eerie window. The reflection is on the verge of escaping, and they must solve a series of puzzles to seal it back into the glass. They have 45 minutes to complete the challenges and “lock” the reflection in place.

**Materials Needed:**

* A large printed image or cardboard cutout of a window to represent Grace's window.
* Locked boxes or envelopes containing clues.
* Printable puzzles (word searches, codes, riddles, etc.).
* Flashlights (to reveal hidden messages).
* Mirrors or reflective surfaces (for thematic elements).
* A small key (hidden as part of a clue).
* A timer.
* A final “seal” item (e.g., a fake shard of glass, a symbolic token).

**Escape Room Flow:**

**Introduction (5 minutes):**
Read the following to set the scene:

"Welcome to Grace’s room. Something is terribly wrong with the window—the reflection has come to life and is trying to escape! You are Grace’s only hope. To stop it, you must solve puzzles and piece together the steps to trap the reflection back in the glass before time runs out. Are you ready? Time starts now!"

**Puzzle 1: The Window's Message (Code Breaker)**

A note is taped to the window with cryptic symbols or a scrambled message.

* **Clue:** Players must decode the message using a cipher key hidden in the room.
* **Solution:** The message reveals: “The first key is hidden where shadows fall.”

**Puzzle 2: Hidden Shadows (Flashlight Search)**

Using a flashlight, players must search the room for glowing ink or hidden markings.

* **Clue:** Hidden on the wall or an object is the word “Mirror.”
* **Solution:** Players locate a mirror in the room with a riddle taped to the back.

**Puzzle 3: The Riddle of the Reflection (Logic Puzzle)**

The riddle reads:

"I show what you see but not what you know. Break my surface, and I let the truth show."

* **Clue:** The answer is “Glass.” Players find a shard of “glass” (a laminated cutout) with instructions leading to the next step.

**Puzzle 4: The Distorted Timeline (Sequencing Game)**

Players find pieces of paper with fragmented story events from *The Vanishing Window* out of order.

* **Task:** They must arrange the events in the correct sequence to unlock the next clue.
* **Solution:** Once arranged, the final event reveals a hint: “The key is closer than you think.”

**Puzzle 5: The Locked Box (Key Challenge)**

A locked box is in the room, and players must locate the hidden key.

* **Clue:** The key is taped under the table or hidden inside another object.
* **Solution:** Inside the box, they find the final “seal” item (e.g., a symbolic token or fake shard of glass).

**Final Step: Sealing the Reflection**

Players must use the collected items (glass shard, symbolic token, etc.) and place them near the window to “seal” it.

**Challenge:** Before sealing the reflection, participants must answer three questions about the book:

1. What emotion makes the reflection stronger? (Answer: Fear)
2. Who helps Grace fight the reflection? (Answer: Zoey)
3. What object is central to trapping the reflection? (Answer: The window)

Once they answer correctly and place the items, the window is sealed, and the reflection is trapped!

**Wrap-Up (5 minutes):**

Congratulate the players!

"You did it! The reflection is safely locked in the window, and Grace is saved. You’ve proven your bravery and problem-solving skills. Thank you for your teamwork!"

**Extensions and Add-Ons:**

1. **Leaderboard:** Record the time taken for groups to complete the escape room.
2. **Creative Twist:** Ask students to write a journal entry as Grace or Zoey reflecting on their victory.
3. **DIY Souvenirs:** Provide small "reflection shards" as keepsakes for participants.

This activity not only reinforces key elements of the story but also encourages teamwork, problem-solving, and engagement with *The Vanishing Window*.