**Escape Room Activity for The Haunted Chronicles: The Mask of Memories**

**Title:** **Escape the Mansion of Memories**
**Age Group:** 9-13

**Duration:** 45-60 minutes
**Group Size:** 4-6 students per group
**Objective:** To solve puzzles and riddles related to the plot and themes of *The Haunted Chronicles: The Mask of Memories* to “escape” the mansion before time runs out.

**Overview**

In this immersive escape room activity, students must solve a series of puzzles to escape from the haunted Mansion of Memories. They will need to rely on clues hidden within the story, their understanding of key themes, critical thinking, and teamwork to solve each puzzle before time runs out. The puzzles will be based on events from the book, focusing on themes of memory, identity, and the supernatural elements of the story.

**Escape Room Setup**

1. **Theme:** The room is decorated to resemble the haunted mansion from *The Mask of Memories*. Dim lighting, mysterious objects (such as masks, keys, old books), and eerie background music help set the tone. Students are divided into small groups, and each group has a designated space within the room to work on the puzzles.
2. **Goal:** The objective is to solve all the puzzles and unlock the final “door” to escape the mansion within 45-60 minutes. Each puzzle represents a challenge or obstacle Elara faced in the story.

**Puzzles and Clues Breakdown**

**Puzzle 1: The Mysterious Invitation**

**Clue:** The students begin by receiving a sealed “invitation” to the masquerade ball, similar to Elara’s in Chapter 1. This invitation contains a riddle leading them to their next clue.

* **Riddle:** "Under the blood-red moon, an ancient secret is in bloom. Seek what is masked but hides in plain sight, find the memory that fades with night."
* **Solution:** The students must search the room for a hidden mask, which has a note attached containing their next clue.

**Puzzle 2: The Masked Memory Match**

**Clue:** The note from the mask leads students to a memory game. They must match different masks with their corresponding guests (use character cards representing the forgotten guests in the mansion).

* **Memory Task:** Each mask corresponds to a character from the masquerade ball. Students must match masks to their descriptions or personality traits from the story. Once all are matched, they unlock the next clue.

**Puzzle 3: The Broken Mirror Code**

**Clue:** After completing the memory match, students discover a broken mirror (pieces of a puzzle). The pieces, when assembled, form a mirror-like shape with symbols on it.

* **Task:** The students must decipher a code hidden in the symbols. Each symbol corresponds to a letter, and the code spells out a phrase that directs them to the next challenge (e.g., "Unmask the forgotten truth").
* **Hint:** Provide a key or cipher chart for them to decode the symbols.

**Puzzle 4: The Cursed Key**

**Clue:** The code leads to a locked box containing a “cursed key.” To unlock the box, students must solve a logic puzzle. The box may have multiple locks, each representing a different challenge.

* **Logic Puzzle Example:** "Four guests attend the ball, and only one wears a red mask. The one with the blue mask stands next to the one who knows the mansion’s secret. The guest with the black mask refuses to speak. Who holds the key?"
* **Solution:** Through deduction, students figure out which guest holds the key to the box, unlocking the cursed key that allows them to proceed to the next challenge.

**Puzzle 5: The Maze of Memories**

**Clue:** Once they unlock the cursed key, the students must navigate a paper or physical maze representing the “Maze of Memories” from Chapter 5.

* **Task:** The maze includes different “memory” checkpoints. At each checkpoint, students must answer a comprehension question related to the story (e.g., "What is the significance of the blood-red moon?" or "Why are the masks cursed?").
* **Objective:** Successfully navigate the maze by answering the questions correctly to reach the final challenge.

**Puzzle 6: The Final Challenge – The Unmasking**

**Clue:** The final puzzle involves a chest with a combination lock. The chest holds the last piece of the puzzle: a note explaining how to break the mansion’s curse and escape. However, students must first solve a riddle to find the combination.

* **Riddle:** "To end the ball, the curse must break. Three numbers you must forsake. The first is the guests, the second the dance, the third is the hour of the mansion’s trance."
* **Solution:** The students must remember key numbers from the story (e.g., the number of guests, the number of dances, and the hour of the masquerade) to unlock the chest.

**Puzzle 7: Escape the Mansion**

Once the chest is unlocked, the students receive their final clue—a note that reads, “Congratulations, you have unmasked the curse and freed the mansion!” This represents the students successfully escaping the haunted mansion.

**Materials Needed**

* Sealed “invitations” (one per group)
* Masks (for Puzzle 2)
* Character cards with descriptions for the memory match
* Puzzle pieces with mirror symbols (for Puzzle 3)
* Locked box with multiple locks (for Puzzle 4)
* Maze diagram or physical maze setup (for Puzzle 5)
* Combination lock and chest (for Puzzle 6)
* Riddles and clue notes for each puzzle
* Optional: dim lighting, background music, props to set the mood (candles, old books, etc.)

**Hints and Time Management**

* Provide each group with 3 hint cards they can use at any point during the escape room. These hints could be additional clues or answers to particularly tricky puzzles.
* Display a countdown timer to add urgency (e.g., a projected clock that ticks down from 45 minutes).
* If students finish early, allow them to reflect on which puzzle was the hardest and how it relates to the story.

**Wrap-Up Discussion**

Once the activity is complete, lead a discussion about how the puzzles relate to the key themes of *The Haunted Chronicles: The Mask of Memories*:

* **Memory and Identity:** How did Elara’s journey in the mansion connect to the idea of losing and regaining identity?
* **Teamwork and Problem-Solving:** How did teamwork help solve the escape room challenges?
* **Creative Elements:** What elements from the story were incorporated into the escape room? How did they enhance the experience?

**Assessment**

Students could be assessed on:

1. **Teamwork and collaboration** during the activity.
2. **Critical thinking and problem-solving** when completing each puzzle.
3. **Connection to the story’s themes** through reflection and discussion after the escape room challenge.