**Escape Room Activity for the Classroom: Passengers of the Underworld**

**The Haunted Chronicles**

**Theme:** *Passengers of the Underworld* Escape Room  
**Age Group:** (9-13 years old)  
**Time Duration:** 45-60 minutes

**Overview:**

This escape room activity is designed to immerse students in the world of *Passengers of the Underworld*, challenging them to solve a series of puzzles based on the book's themes, characters, and plot. Students will work together to solve clues, "fix the broken watch," and escape the cursed train before time runs out. The activity can be adapted for various group sizes and skill levels, with physical or digital setups.

**Learning Objectives:**

By completing this escape room, students will:

1. Develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
2. Use context clues from the novel to solve puzzles related to the story.
3. Collaborate in teams to achieve a common goal under time constraints.
4. Build on their understanding of the book’s themes (time, regret, redemption) through interactive learning.

**Setup and Materials:**

* **Classroom Decorations:**
  + Fog machine or cotton "fog" for atmosphere.
  + Dark lighting with string lights to simulate a train car.
  + Props such as old watches, maps, keys, and vintage-style furniture to mimic the eerie setting from the novel.
* **Materials:**
  + Clue envelopes or lockboxes.
  + Physical locks (number/word locks or digital codes).
  + Puzzles, ciphers, or printable worksheets.
  + Pocket watch prop (symbolizing the broken watch in the story).
  + Timer (optional digital countdown).
* **Tech Requirements (optional):**
  + A computer or tablet for students to access digital puzzles or clues.
  + A projector to display the final puzzle (or project a countdown timer).

**Escape Room Storyline:**

Students are trapped on the Midnight Train, much like the protagonist Cole. They must solve a series of puzzles to fix the broken pocket watch and escape the train before it reaches its final destination—the underworld. The conductor is always watching, and only the cleverest passengers can escape before the train's final whistle.

**Escape Room Puzzles:**

1. **Puzzle 1: Decoding the Train Schedule (Introduction Puzzle)**  
   **Objective:** Students must decode a series of dates and times related to when the Midnight Train departs, representing clues hidden in the book.

**Clue:**  
On the classroom wall, a fake "train schedule" shows departure times written in a cipher (e.g., Caesar cipher, Morse code, or numeric substitution). The students must decode it to find out when the next departure is. The departure time is the code to unlock the first lock or box.

**Solution:**  
The decoded message reveals the phrase: “6:00 Midnight Departure.” The number "600" opens the first lockbox.

1. **Puzzle 2: The Conductor’s Contract (Literary Analysis Puzzle)**  
   **Objective:** Students must read a passage from the novel to find hidden clues about the conductor's deal, using context clues to reveal a key piece of information.

**Clue:**  
In a manila folder marked "The Conductor's Contract," a short excerpt from *Passengers of the Underworld* describes a deal the conductor offers to a passenger. Within the passage are bolded letters or words that seem out of place. When rearranged, these bold letters spell the next clue.

**Solution:**  
The letters spell out "KEY" leading to a hidden key in the room that unlocks the next step.

1. **Puzzle 3: The Shadow Passengers (Logic Puzzle)**  
   **Objective:** Students must match a set of shadowy passengers to their corresponding objects, which are described in the book.

**Clue:**  
Students are given descriptions of different passengers and the items they carry (pocket watches, photographs, necklaces). They must match the passengers with their items based on clues from the book (provided on small cards).

**Solution:**  
When the objects are correctly matched to the passengers, students will see that the first letter of each item spells the code for the next lock (e.g., "WATCH" opens the next clue).

1. **Puzzle 4: Fixing the Broken Watch (Math and Logic Puzzle)**  
   **Objective:** Students need to solve a series of math problems related to time (e.g., addition and subtraction of hours and minutes) to "fix" the broken watch.

**Clue:**  
A pocket watch prop is placed inside a lockbox. When students open it, they find the watch's hands frozen. Accompanying the watch is a page with scrambled times (like "10:45," "3:30," etc.). Students need to solve math problems that involve adding or subtracting time to move the hands of the watch to the correct hour, unlocking the next step.

**Solution:**  
The final time on the watch (e.g., 12:00) is the code for the next step.

1. **Puzzle 5: The Mirror’s Riddle (Critical Thinking and Reflection Puzzle)**  
   **Objective:** Students solve a riddle from the haunted mirror, reflecting themes from the book (e.g., facing the past).

**Clue:**  
On a mirror in the classroom, a riddle is taped to the surface: “I see what you see, but not what you want to be. If you face me, you’ll find the key.” Students must reflect on what the mirror symbolizes in *Passengers of the Underworld* (facing regrets). A hidden object (like a key) is behind the mirror.

**Solution:**  
Once students retrieve the key, they move to the final puzzle.

1. **Puzzle 6: The Final Stop (Word Puzzle – Themed Escape)**  
   **Objective:** The last puzzle asks students to solve a word scramble or crossword puzzle with key terms from the book (e.g., "conductor," "train," "regret").

**Clue:**  
Students receive a scrambled word puzzle. Each word is connected to major plot points in the book. When unscrambled, the final word reveals the code to stop the train and unlock the escape door.

**Solution:**  
Students solve the word scramble (e.g., the final word could be "freedom" or "escape"). The teacher opens the “door” to let them off the train.

**Instructions for Teachers:**

1. **Setup:**  
   Decorate the classroom to mimic the eerie atmosphere of the Midnight Train. Place envelopes, locks, or boxes around the room, each containing a puzzle. The students' mission is to move from one station to the next, solving each puzzle to progress.
2. **Introduction:**  
   Begin by reading a short introduction or showing a video that sets the scene: “You’ve boarded the Midnight Train, a mysterious, haunted vessel that collects souls. You have 45 minutes to solve the puzzles and escape before the train reaches its final stop: the Underworld.”
3. **Grouping:**  
   Divide students into teams of 3-5. Each group works together to solve the puzzles. Provide a brief overview of each puzzle but allow them to uncover the connections as they progress.
4. **Monitoring:**  
   As the students work, offer hints if they get stuck. The goal is for every group to feel challenged but also be able to succeed before time runs out.

**Optional Modifications:**

* **Physical or Digital:**  
  If a physical escape room setup is not feasible, create a virtual escape room using tools like Google Forms or Google Slides where students progress by entering correct answers to unlock the next stage.
* **Differentiation for Various Skill Levels:**  
  Adjust the difficulty level of puzzles for different student groups. Provide more complex clues for advanced students or offer simplified versions for younger or struggling students.
* **Time Limit Variations:**  
  If you have more or less time, adjust the number of puzzles and complexity to fit your schedule.

**Post-Escape Discussion:**

1. **Reflection:**  
   After completing the escape room, hold a class discussion about how the activity related to the themes in *Passengers of the Underworld*.
   * What strategies did you use to solve the puzzles?
   * How did this experience help you understand the themes of time, regret, and redemption in the novel?
2. **Creative Extension:**  
   Ask students to design their own escape room based on another part of the novel or a different book they’ve read. This can be a group project where students create puzzles and clues for their classmates to solve.

**Conclusion:**

The *Passengers of the Underworld* escape room offers an interactive and engaging way for students to dive deeper into the themes of the novel while building teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. Through a mix of puzzles, riddles, and hands-on activities, students will experience the tension and mystery of Cole’s journey as they race to escape the Midnight Train before it reaches the final stop.