**Escape Room Activity: *The Haunted Chronicles: The Cemetery of Forgotten Names***

**Grade Level: Middle Grade (Ages 9-12)**

**Duration: 60-90 minutes**

**Objective:**

Students will work collaboratively to solve puzzles and riddles related to *The Cemetery of Forgotten Names* to "escape" the haunted cemetery. This activity is designed to reinforce key concepts from the book, including plot details, character development, and the major themes of memory, identity, and supernatural suspense.

**Setup and Preparation:**

**Materials Needed:**

* Envelopes (for clues and puzzles)
* Locks (combination or key locks for puzzle solutions)
* "Cemetery Map" (can be a simple drawing of the cemetery and key locations like the archway, tombstones, and The Reclaimer’s Lair)
* Flashcards with clues, riddles, and ciphers
* Props (optional): Gravestone cutouts, paper gravestones with students’ names on them, fog machine (for ambiance), etc.

**Escape Room Theme:**

Students are "trapped" in the haunted cemetery after stumbling upon a gravestone with their name on it (like Morgan in the story). They must solve a series of puzzles related to the plot of *The Cemetery of Forgotten Names* to escape before The Reclaimer erases their names and claims their identities.

**Instructions for Teachers:**

1. **Divide Students into Teams**:
   * Each group is tasked with finding clues and solving puzzles to "escape" the cemetery. Each puzzle must be solved before they can unlock the next clue.
   * For larger classes, you can create multiple "escape routes" so different groups can work on different puzzles.
2. **Puzzle Stations**:
   * Each station represents a different chapter or element from the book, with a related challenge or puzzle to solve. When they solve the puzzle, they unlock the next part of the escape room.
3. **Timer**:
   * Set the timer for 60 minutes. The goal is for students to solve all puzzles and escape before time runs out, representing the need to escape before they "disappear."

**The Puzzles:**

**Station 1: The Forgotten Path (Chapter 1)**

* **Clue**: Students are given a map of the cemetery (simplified) and must find the hidden "archway" that leads to the rest of the clues.
  + The map should have subtle markings or hidden symbols that direct students to the next station.
  + *Hint*: Use UV pens or invisible ink so students can only see the clues under a flashlight (symbolizing how Morgan discovered the cemetery).
* **Task**: Locate a hidden message on the map by using UV light or decoding a cipher that leads them to the next location (e.g., the archway or gravestones). The clue leads them to Station 2.

**Station 2: The Gravestone Puzzle (Chapter 3)**

* **Clue**: Students are given a riddle that reveals whose name is carved on a gravestone. (This puzzle connects to the moment Morgan sees her own name on the gravestone).

**Riddle Example**: *“I walk the earth, though my name is set in stone. The shadow of my past is cast in every grave I’ve known. Who am I?”* (Answer: Morgan)

* **Task**: Solve the riddle and find the gravestone with the correct name. Once they identify the gravestone, the clue directs them to the next station where they must decode the secret it holds.

**Station 3: The Reclaimer’s Lair (Chapter 7)**

* **Clue**: This station involves cracking a combination lock. The combination is hidden in a cipher or puzzle.

**Cipher Example**: Use a Caesar cipher with a hint that students have to decode to reveal the combination numbers.

* **Task**: Students use the cipher to reveal the correct combination to unlock a box that contains the next clue. (This clue might reveal a key phrase like "You’ve been marked," linking it back to the central conflict with The Reclaimer).

**Station 4: The Memory Puzzle (Chapter 6-7)**

* **Clue**: Memory is a key theme of *The Cemetery of Forgotten Names*. In this station, students must recall details from the book.

**Task**:

* + Create a "Memory Matching Game" where students match pairs of significant symbols, characters, or events from the book. For example, they might match characters with their key moments, such as "Morgan" and "The Gravestone," or "Aspen" and "Sacrifice."
  + When they match all the correct pairs, they receive the final clue leading them to the last station.

**Station 5: Breaking the Curse (Chapter 9-10)**

* **Clue**: In the story, Morgan destroys the pedestal in The Reclaimer’s Lair to break the curse. At this station, students must "destroy" a representation of the curse (such as solving a final puzzle that represents breaking the Reclaimer’s power).

**Task**:

* + Give students a set of scrambled letters that form a key phrase from the book, such as "Escape the Reclaimer" or "Break the Curse."
  + Students must unscramble the letters to form the phrase. When they do, the "curse is broken," and they unlock the final lock to "escape" the cemetery.

**Clue Examples:**

1. **Cipher Clue** (for Station 3):
   * Use a simple Caesar cipher where letters are shifted. Provide students with a coded message like: "Gr fq ts ymnx." (Answer: "Do it for them.")
   * The correct phrase gives them a hint to solving the next step.
2. **Riddle Example** (Station 2):
   * “In shadows I move, in memory I dwell. To claim your name is the toll of my bell. Who am I?” (Answer: The Reclaimer)

**Escape Room Reflection Questions:**

After completing the escape room, bring the class together to reflect on the activity:

1. **How did working as a team help you solve the puzzles?**
2. **Which puzzle was the most difficult, and how did you overcome the challenge?**
3. **How did solving the puzzles help you understand key elements from *The Cemetery of Forgotten Names*?**
4. **What connections can you make between the puzzles and the story’s themes of memory, identity, and sacrifice?**

**Adaptations for Differentiated Learning:**

* **Advanced Learners**: Include more complex puzzles, such as multi-step ciphers or codes.
* **Struggling Learners**: Simplify puzzles and provide additional hints or guidance at each station. Consider pairing students in mixed-ability groups to encourage collaboration.
* **Visual Learners**: Incorporate more visual clues, maps, and images to enhance their engagement with the puzzles.
* **Auditory Learners**: Add sound elements (e.g., recorded clues or character voices) to help these learners engage with the theme.

This escape room is designed to reinforce reading comprehension, foster teamwork, and immerse students in the mysterious world of *The Haunted Chronicles*. It offers an exciting, hands-on way to engage with the themes, characters, and suspenseful plot of *The Cemetery of Forgotten Names*, making learning interactive and fun!