

The Mail of May

1 Taylor wondered whether a letter would arrive but immediately dismissed the thought. Of course it would arrive. Today was the last day of May, and a letter to Andy Harper had arrived every May since Taylor's family had moved into the house five years ago. The problem was that no one named Andy Harper lived at their address. Taylor hoped that this May's envelope might provide some clue about the mysterious sender, the contents, or the recipient.

2 Over the years, Taylor's parents had stuffed the Andy Harper envelopes into a folder in a drawer. Taylor had spent hours studying them for clues. The envelopes' padding helped conceal the contents, but they all felt and weighed the same. Each one was addressed to "Andy Harper" in identical decorative handwriting. Based on the cursive writing, Taylor concluded that the sender had a creative and dramatic personality. An artist or a writer, or possibly an adventurer? With no return address, it was impossible to know where the envelopes had come from or who had sent them.

3 Taylor stared out the front window and then went to the drawer of letters, not certain why. He thought about the wager he had made with his brother Chris about the identity of Andy. Taylor had settled on the idea that Andy was a relative who had disappeared while sailing around the world, while Chris had decided that Andy was an author who used to live in their house before becoming famous under a pen name.

4 A few hours ago, Taylor's mom had left to run some errands. She would be returning soon. Taylor looked down the hallway toward Chris's open bedroom door. The first-year college student, home for the summer, was unpacking and listening to music on his earbuds. Taylor grinned as Chris, unaware that Taylor was watching, held a rolled-up T-shirt like a microphone and sang into it intensely as though he were onstage before his adoring fans.

5 Taylor heard a vehicle outside and looked out the front window again. The mail van was just pulling away! Excitedly, Taylor ran to the mailbox.

6 The letter for Andy Harper had indeed arrived. And it was not sealed!

7 Clutching the envelope, Taylor ran to Chris's room and yelled, "Chris, look!"

8 Chris muttered, "Just a sec," and continued to unpack his suitcase, so Taylor waved the open envelope in front of Chris's face.

9 Chris stared at the envelope in horror. "What have you done?" he shouted.

10 "It was delivered this way!" Taylor protested, holding the envelope at arm's length.

11 Chris paused, and then his voice dropped. "Did you look inside?"

12 “Of course not!” Taylor replied indignantly.

13 “Okay, I believe you,” Chris said. A mischievous smile spread across his face. “But, since it’s open . . . do you want to see what’s inside?”

14 Taylor froze.

15 Chris held the envelope open side down over his bed. Two pieces of paper—a letter and a map—slid out of the envelope, followed by a dried flower and a key.

16 The letter was handwritten in beautiful, elaborate script. The map contained a compass star at the top right corner, along with odd squares, circles, and triangles scattered across the page. Various numbers and letters appeared next to the shapes, resembling a code.

17 Taylor could not identify the flower, but it was beautiful. The key looked old and well-used.

18 As Chris started reading the letter aloud, Taylor picked up the envelope and shook it.

19 “Wait!” Taylor exclaimed. “Look at this!” He turned the envelope upside down, and something else fell out.

Read “The Mail of May.”

In your own words, write a multi-paragraph narrative that continues the story by describing what the boys discover about the mysterious letters.

Use what you have learned from the passage to help you write your story.

Remember to —

- provide a beginning, a middle, and an end to your story
- put events in the order in which they happen
- include descriptions of people, objects, and settings
- use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar

Use the space provided to write your story.