Closing Time at Pollard's

Christmas Eve, closing time. The staff presents are locked in Ada's trunk, and the doors lock at nine.

A printable Christmas escape room for teens and adults.

Best for teens and adults

4–12 players · about 30–45 minutes

A free printable from Kinundrum. Free for home and school use. Please don't post it publicly or sell it.

Host notes

Read before printing. You can still play.

Print single-sided. Black and white is fine:

- The story page
- The Toy Train
- The Telegram
- The Front Window
- The Lift
- The Ledger
- Ada's Day-book
- Hint strips (cut apart)
- The Answer Page (fold and seal)
- Another way to play (optional, the last page)

If a player can't easily see the pictures or uses a screen reader, print Another way to play (the last page) too, or read it aloud.

Set up

1. Cut Ada's day-book into its six cards and shuffle them.
2. Cut the hint strips apart. Fold each one so only its label shows and tape it shut: it unfolds to Hint 1, then Hint 2, then the answer.
3. Fold the Answer Page shut under its top flap and tape it. Don't read it, so you can play.
4. Spread the four puzzle pages face down, with pens. Keep the Ledger with the day-book cards: they're the last puzzle.
5. Optional: a small treat per player in a box, with a note: *Locked until closing time*.
6. Set a 45-minute timer, but don't start it yet.

Rules

- Read the story card aloud, then start the timer.
- Do the four puzzle pages in any order and write each answer on its page. When all four are solved, hand over the Ledger and Ada's day-book cards together.
- Stuck? Open one fold of that puzzle's hint strip. There's no penalty, it's a party.
- When you think you know the word, say it aloud together, then open the Answer Page.

Good to know

- Setup takes about 10 minutes.
- 4 or 5 players: one team. 6 to 12: two or three teams, each starting on a different page. Competitive? Print a set per team; first to say the word picks a treat first.

The story (read aloud)

It's Christmas Eve at Pollard & Daughters, the old department store on the corner, and the doors have just shut behind the last customer. Your crew has spent all December behind its counters and in its windows: wrapping parcels, untangling lights and riding the creaky lift up and down.

Every year, Ada Pollard hands out the staff presents herself at closing time. This year she's gone to catch the eight o'clock train, and the presents are in the old steamer trunk in the wrapping room, shut with a brass lock: four dials, each with the letters A to Z. On the lid is an envelope in her small, square handwriting:

> *Dear crew,*
>
> *You've wrapped everybody else's Christmas all month. Now unwrap your own. The trunk opens to one four-letter word, and I've hidden it a piece at a time this December, in four places: the toy train, the lift, the telegram and the front window. My day-book says which day I went to each, and that's the order you'll need. You'll get its pages with the Ledger, once all four places have given up their answers.*
>
> *Mr Okafor locks the front doors at nine sharp. Mind you're out by then, presents and all.*
>
> *— Ada*

Somewhere upstairs, the big store clock ticks over to a quarter past eight.

Start the timer.

The Toy Train

All December, a toy train has run round the model town in the corner window. The town is six streets by six, and every little shop has a letter painted on its roof. The train is waiting at the station, the square with the dot.

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
1	Y	L	O	N	L	T
2	H	U	C	T	A	Y
3	N	B	W	M	C	H
4	W	T	•	A	A	I
5	S	K	E	K	R	F
6	S	D	U	F	C	E

Tucked into the coal tender is Ada's timetable for the train's last run of the year:

2 north, 2 east · 1 north, 3 west · 3 east

Two toots on the whistle, then:

3 south · 1 north, 3 west · 2 north, 1 east · 3 south, 1 east · 1 south, 1 east · 1 south, 3 west

North is the top of the board and east is to the right. Each stop is one shop.

The train's last run spells:

☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐☐

The Telegram

Pinned to the staff noticeboard since early December: a telegram from Ada, written in the shop's code. Every letter has been slid along the alphabet by the same number of places. Nobody ever told the crew how many.

APCU QRMN RFC UGLBMU GQ BPCQQCB
YLB RFC JGEFRQ YPC ML QRMN MLC
JYQR HMZ ZCDMPC AFPGQRKYQ QRMN
UPYN SN UYPK QRMN YBY

Along the edge, someone has ruled a strip:

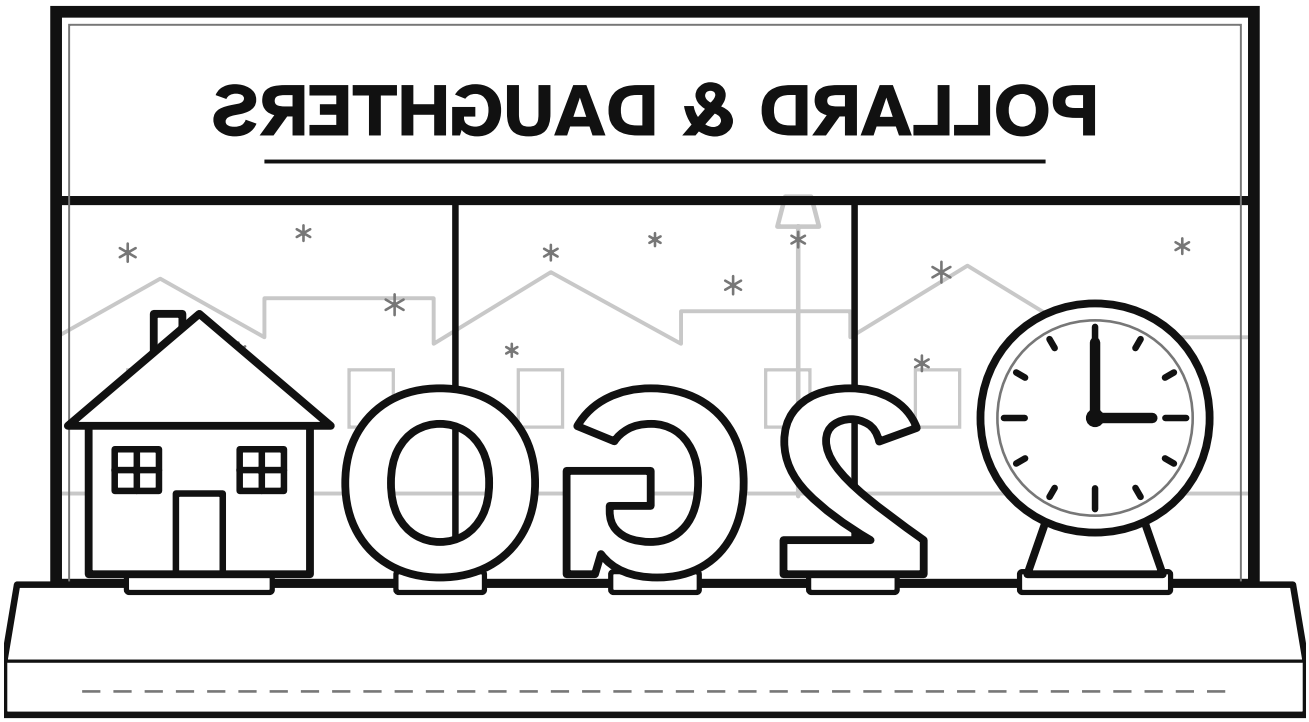
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

Ada's last job of the year:

☐☐☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐☐☐

The Front Window

You're standing inside the big front window, behind Ada's Christmas display. Five cut-outs stand on the window bed, and the store's name is painted in gold across the glass.



The window says:

□□□□ □□ □□ □□□□

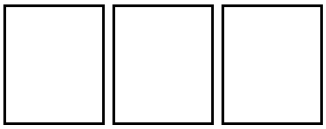
On a card pinned inside the window frame

Never dress a window for the people in the shop. Dress it for the people in the street. — A.P.

The Lift

The brass board in the lift that lists the departments is off being polished, and Mr Okafor, who runs the lift, can never remember which floor is which. His notebook has four things he's sure of. The buttons go from 1 to 6, with one department on each floor: Toys, Clocks, Gloves, Hats, Books and Lamps.

Beside the lift is the key cabinet. Ada's note is taped to its door: "The hook I mean: Toys, then Clocks, then Gloves."

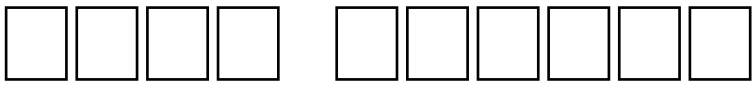


No.	Mr Okafor's notebook
1	Clocks is exactly halfway between Hats and Toys.
2	Gloves is one floor above Hats.
3	Books is on an even floor, somewhere below Clocks.
4	Lamps is not on floor 1.

The key hooks

316 · Gold tinsel	**524** · Iron kettle	**163** · Silk ribbon
631 · Lace collar	**346** · Wool mitten	**136** · Snow globes
613 · Hand mirror	**245** · Rose teapot	**361** · Wool jumper

The tag on the hook reads:

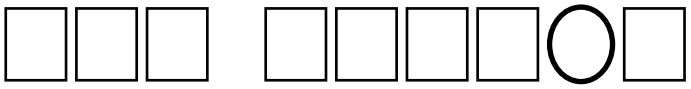


The Ledger

Copy each place's answer from its page into the boxes.

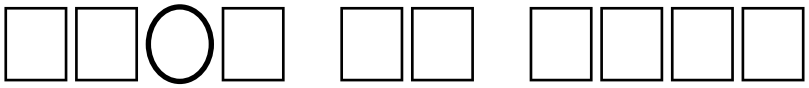
Ada's day-book gives the four places in the order she went to them.

The toy train's last run spells:



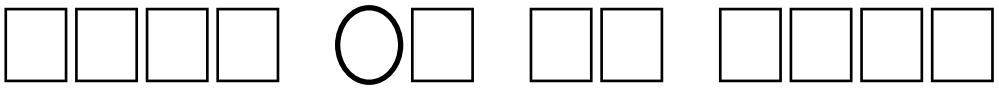
Letter: _____

Ada's last job of the year:



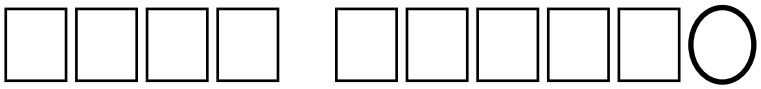
Letter: _____

The front window says:



Letter: _____

The tag on the key hook reads:

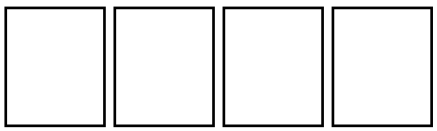


Letter: _____

In order:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

Write each place's circled letter in that order:



Say it aloud together, then open the Answer Page.

Ada's Day-book

Six pages torn from Ada's December day-book. Put them back in order and you'll know the order she went to the four places, and how to read the Ledger.

Cut these cards apart and shuffle them before play.

"The toy train came from the makers on a Saturday, eleven days after the windows were papered over. I hid my piece in it that evening."

"Thursday the 24th. Trunk locked, envelope on the lid. Off to catch the eight o'clock train."

"I dressed the front window on the one Monday between the lift and the telegram."

"Tuesday the 1st of December. The windows are papered over for dressing. Twenty-three days to go."

"I sent the telegram two days before the toy train arrived."

"The lift: the first Friday of the month, once Mr Okafor had gone home."

Hint strips

Cut along the dashed lines. Fold each strip so only its label shows. Open one fold at a time.

The Toy Train

fold

Hint 1 A train doesn't jump back to the station between stops. Each trip starts from the shop where the last one ended.

fold

Hint 2 The station is row 4, column 3. Two north and two east takes the train to row 2, column 5: A. From there, one north and three west reaches row 1, column 2.

fold

Hint 3 Answer: **ALL ABOARD.**

The Telegram

fold

Hint 1 Telegrams never used full stops. One short word comes up again and again in this one. What did a telegram say instead of a full stop?

fold

Hint 2 QRMN is STOP, so Q stands for S: every letter has moved 2 places back. Move each one 2 forward: A becomes C.

fold

Hint 3 Answer: **WRAP UP WARM.** ("Crew, stop. The window is dressed and the lights are on, stop. One last job before Christmas, stop. Wrap up warm, stop. Ada.")

The Front Window

fold

Hint 1 Look at the store's name on the glass. Why is it backwards, and who is the window meant for?

fold

Hint 2 Read the display the way someone on the pavement sees it, starting from the clock. Some cut-outs are pictures and some are letters or a number. The clock stands for a word, but not the word clock.

fold

Hint 3 Answer: **TIME TO GO HOME.** From the street: the clock (time), 2 (to), G O, and the house (home).

Hint strips

Cut along the dashed lines. Fold each strip so only its label shows. Open one fold at a time.

The Lift

Hint 1 Gloves sits right on top of Hats, so they fill two floors next to each other. Try each place they could go, then see where Toys and Clocks could fit.

Hint 2 Halfway means Hats and Toys are both on odd floors or both on even ones. Books needs an even floor below Clocks, which leaves only two ways to fill the store. Lamps decides between them.

Hint 3 Answer: **136**, the hook for **SNOW GLOBES.** Toys 1, Books 2, Clocks 3, Lamps 4, Hats 5, Gloves 6.

Ada's Day-book

Hint 1 Give every card a date. Two cards tell you theirs outright, and the 1st is a Tuesday.

Hint 2 With the 1st a Tuesday, the first Friday is the 4th. Count eleven days on from the 1st for the train, then work back to the telegram and the window.

Hint 3 Answer: **Lift, window, telegram, toy train.** The lift on Friday the 4th, the window on Monday the 7th, the telegram on Thursday the 10th and the train on Saturday the 12th.

The Ledger

Hint 1 Write the four places in the order from Ada's day-book. Take the circled letter from each place's answer, in that order.

Hint 2 Getting RATS means you used the order the pages are printed in, or another order that isn't Ada's. Check the dates in her day-book again.

Hint 3 Answer: **STAR.**

tape here

tape here

The Answer Page

Fold and seal. Open only at the end.

Top flap. Read this first.

If you said RATS: Close, but no. That isn't the order Ada went to the places (the pages are printed in a different order). Check her day-book and try again before you open the flap. Said something else? Open it.

fold here

The word is STAR.

You turn the dials together. The lock gives a small, satisfied click, and the lid of the trunk creaks open. Inside are the presents, one for each of you, wrapped in the shop's paper with your names on the tags. On top is one last card:

Every window needs a star at the top. This year I didn't need one: I had all of you. Now it's time to go home, and wrap up warm. — Ada

Before you go: tell the person next to you the best thing they did this year.

You opened the trunk with ____ minutes to spare.

Place	Answer	Letter
The Toy Train	ALL ABOARD	R
The Telegram	WRAP UP WARM	A
The Front Window	TIME TO GO HOME	T
The Lift	136: SNOW GLOBES	S
Ada's Day-book	Lift, window, telegram, toy train	(order)

Want one built from your own group's stories, jokes and history? Join the Kinundrum Advent beta.

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Another way to play

Text versions of the puzzles that rely on pictures, for a player who can't easily see them or uses a screen reader. The answers and the hints are the same, so write answers on the puzzle's own page.

The Front Window

You're standing inside the shop, behind the display. This is what you see, as you see it:

Painted in gold across the top of the glass is the store's name, with every letter facing the wrong way: SRETHGUAD & DRALLOP.

Five cut-outs stand on the window bed. From left to right: a little house; the letter O; the letter G, facing the wrong way; the number 2, facing the wrong way; and a round clock with its numbers back to front and its hands pointing at 12 and 3.

Through the glass, faintly: the houses across the road, a lamppost and a little snow.

The card pinned inside the window frame, the boxes and the hints are the same as on the Front Window page.