



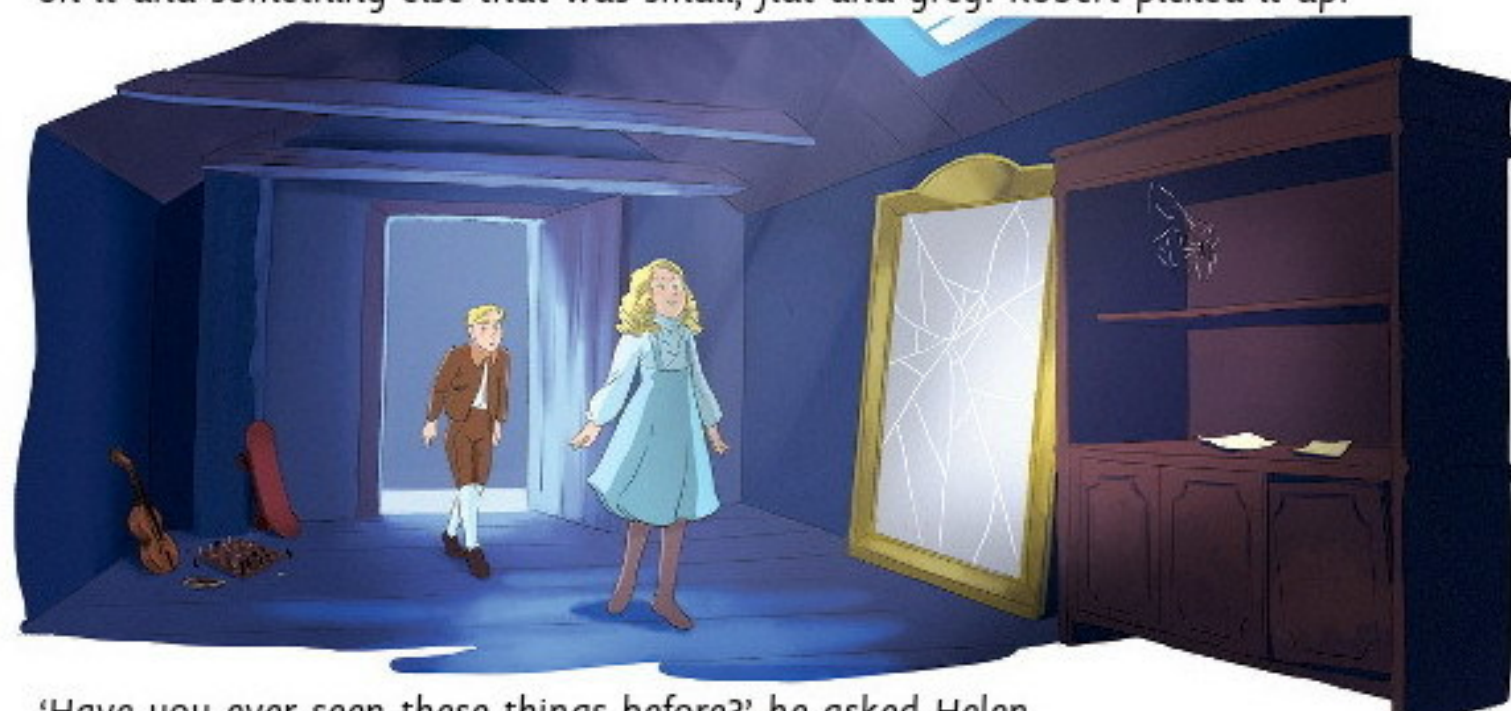
The past and the future

It was a foggy, autumn day in London, 150 years ago and Helen could only see a few grey shapes through her bedroom window. But then she heard a noise somewhere above her and went to find her brother. He was reading about 16th century kings and queens.

'I heard something upstairs, Robert. Let's explore the top rooms,' she said.

'All right!' Robert answered and closed his book. 'Come on!'

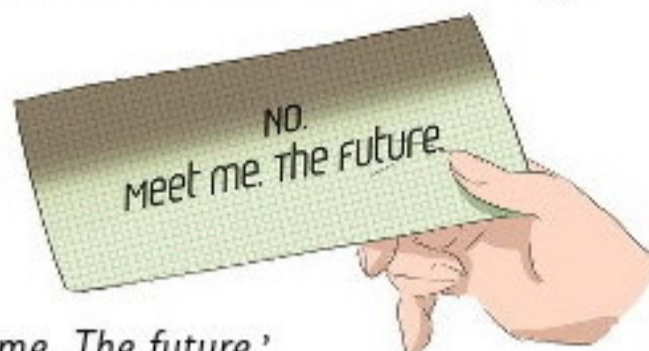
The children almost never went into the top rooms. They were dark and cold places. There were no lights or fires, no rugs on the floor and no chairs to sit on. In the first two rooms, they only found mouse holes. But in the third room, an enormous broken mirror stood next to a bookcase. In one corner there was an old violin, a chess set, a long, thin red board with wheels on it and something else that was small, flat and grey. Robert picked it up.



'Have you ever seen these things before?' he asked Helen.

'Never,' she said.

There were no books in the bookcase, just a slow, old spider and two small pieces of paper. Helen took them to the window where it was easier to read the writing.



'Look at this,' she whispered. 'It says *No. Meet me. The future.*'

Suddenly, there was another sound behind Helen. She turned around and saw a strange boy in the broken mirror. He was trying to say something but his words, like the glass in the mirror, were broken into small pieces.



Then the strange grey object in Robert's hand began to move a little. Robert threw it to Helen and the moment her fingers touched it, the boy from the mirror jumped into the room.

'Hi! You got my message! Great! Pleased to meet you!' he said.

Helen was too surprised to speak but her brother wasn't.

'Excuse me,' he said. 'Have you come to help us? I've got some difficult homework. What do you know about 16th century kings and queens?'

'Nothing!' the boy said. 'But in 150 years, you can find out about anything really quickly on a computer ... a glass screen that's full of light and sound! You can watch moving pictures on it, listen to and read information, do puzzles, draw pictures called cartoons and play learning games on it too.'

'How do you know?' Helen said.

'Because I'm from the future. That's where and when I live,' the boy answered. 'I often travel in time. I've come back for my skateboard. I forgot to take it home.'

