

**Unit 4: Mystery Book Clubs:
Spotlight on Inferring and Synthesizing (4 weeks)**

Rationale

Why is this unit important and appropriate for this grade level and at this time of the year?

Mystery is a genre that keeps students turning pages, providing a wonderful opportunity to push students into increasing their reading volume and stamina. Students will gain an understanding for the structure and unique elements of the mystery genre. The knowledge of how mysteries tend to go allows students to practice synthesizing as they figure out how one chapter fits with the ones before it, and how patterns emerge between various mystery books.

Learning Outcomes

What do we expect students to know and be able to do at the end of the unit?

Students will:

- Be active participants in their book clubs to listen to divergent ideas and different voices
- Demonstrate the qualities of good book talk by engaging in conversations that deepen understanding of the text
- Understand the elements of mystery
- Integrate the strategies of predicting, inferring and synthesizing to solve mysteries
- Use evidence from the text to support theories about the characters and the mystery

Minilessons/Notes/Tips

What minilessons will lead to student learning outcomes?

Possible Minilessons:

- Developing a class understanding of the qualities of good book talk – what does it sound like, look like
- Modeling how readers prepare for book conversations by jotting notes about their thinking (Post-its, graphic organizers or in their reader’s notebook)
- Modeling how readers prepare for book conversation by rereading to rehearse their ideas
- Developing questions for book club talk by reviewing and synthesizing notes
- Identifying expectations for book clubs
 - Be prepared (reading done, notes, questions)
 - Take turns talking
 - Focus on one idea before moving onto another
 - Push one another’s thinking
 - Keep the talk going
- Using statements to continue book talk
 - So what you are saying is...
 - Tell us what...
 - Let’s talk about...
 - That’s true but I’m also thinking...
 - I believe...
 - It is important...
 - But maybe...
 - I disagree with ... because...
- Understanding the difference between thick and thin questions when generating/proposing questions for book talk
- Managing conversation so that all members participate

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- Understanding characteristics and vocabulary unique to the mystery genre
 - Detective
 - Mystery
 - Case
 - Clues
 - Suspect
 - Red herring
 - Sleuth
 - Suspect
 - Witness
 - Motive
 - Innocence
 - Guilty
- Reviewing the story arc in narrative texts where a problem is revealed heightened, and eventually solved and using it to read mysteries
- Reading like detectives to solve the mystery before the crime solver does
 - Reading text closely
 - Paying attention to clues
- Asking, “What is the mystery here?” to identify the main problem
- Noticing similarities (e.g., characters, setting) within a series and attending to the *other* settings the crime solver visits to collect clues
- Recognizing that new settings and clues are crucial to putting together the pieces of the mystery
- Collecting clues and using them to grow theories
- Growing ideas about characters
- Stepping inside the shoes of the detective, what would you do next to solve the mystery
- Noticing red herrings and trying not to fall for these false clues
- Noticing clues in the details, reading closely to spot additional clues missed the first time
- Synthesizing text by stopping after each chapter and figuring out how that one chapters fits with the ones before it and the overall mystery
- Creating a time line of the crime
- Shifting between the current story and the past to piece together what has happened
- Using clues to infer, using phrases such as
 - I think this mean...
 - I think this could show...
 - Because of this...I think...
- Maintaining more than one prediction and rationales for these predictions
- Making lists of suspects and revising the lists based on information and behavior that seems out of place
- Identifying the motivation each suspect might have for committing the crime
- Going back in the story and asking, “What did the detective learn that I should have learned?”
- Building vocabulary around criminal motives (e.g., jealousy, revenge, greed)
- Asking book club members questions such as
 - Why would...
 - Who would...
 - Who had the opportunity to do this?
 - Who was near the scene of the crime or had access to it?
 - Why would this suspect want to do this? What would he/she get out of it?
- Celebrating the end of the unit. Possibilities may include but are not limited to the following:
 - Show a video or audiotape of a book club having a conversation. Have students identify the effective talk moves of the group. Chart responses and refer back to chart at the start of this historical fiction and fiction book club studies later in the year.
 - Have club members each complete a self-reflection. What did we do well? What are some areas we needed to work on? What did I learn about being a club member? What will be important to remember when I work in my next book club?
 - Have students work in partnerships/small groups to compose a mystery (short story). Have partners/groups share pieces with one another. See if audience is able to identify the mystery elements and solve the mystery before finishing reading the text. (Variation - write a class mystery text together as part of shared writing. Share with reading buddy class.)
 - Have students complete a mystery study reflection. (What did you learn about reading mysteries that you did not know before? How can you apply what you have learned about reading mysteries

to all of your reading? Be as specific as possible.)

Notes/Tips:

- ***It is critical for students to continue reading their just right books independently for a minimum of 45 minutes.***
- Meet with guided reading groups consistently as a way to differentiate reading instruction for all students.
- It may be helpful to begin the unit with a mystery activity to introduce the genre and engage students. A sample activity may include staging a mystery in the classroom (something from the classroom disappears, for instance). Provide a clue or two to help the children “solve” the mystery (e.g., “I had my glasses on when I left for the teachers’ lounge” or “I saw some tiny footprints near the cubbies.”) Another activity might be viewing a mystery television show (Scooby-Doo) can be used to teach children how mysteries tend to go. (Some teachers may have access to episodes of Nancy Drew/Hardy Boys, Encyclopedia Brown tv shows.) The game of *Clue* can also be used to show students that just as they need to keep track of all of the possible suspects in the game, so too do readers of mysteries.
- Short texts are an effective way to introduce students to the routines, roles, and responsibilities of book clubs. Many teachers have students spend the first week or two reading short typed texts with their club members. Clubs will read a short text, annotate and prepare for talk one day and meet the following day to engage in a conversation about the text.
- There are short typed mystery texts available on the district website. To view Grade 4 archived artifacts for the unit please visit the Grade 4 reading/writing page. Select “Resources” from the top nav bar. To access the units of study website use the link http://ww3.mamkschools.org/units_of_study/.
- Resources for read aloud, shared reading, guided reading and minilessons are as follows: to view a list of annotated mystery texts, picture books and chapter books, please visit <http://www.carolhurst.com/subjects/mysteries.html>, to view a list of mystery short stories to use during shared reading, read aloud, guided reading, minilessons, please visit <http://kids.mysterynet.com/solveit>.
- Recommended resources for mystery texts for independent reading/book clubs include the following: to view recommended genre specific texts for students to read during independent reading use the following link <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/classroom-libraries.html>.
- Book club members should read many books in a series in order to become familiar with the features and structure of the genre as well as develop the skills of predicting, inferring and synthesizing which readers use when reading mysteries. Recommended series includes Mystery A to Z, Jigsaw Jones, Nancy Drew, Boxcar Children, Goosebumps, Chet Geckco, etc. series.
- Use read aloud to model the reading strategies mystery readers use as well as elements of mystery. During read aloud read and discuss several texts from a mystery series. Reading a mystery series at Level L-N is suggested so that multiple texts can be read – modeling the work of the book clubs.
- Scaffold student understanding through many opportunities for discussion of these texts.
 - That’s odd! Let’s reread, paying close attention to the description of this character. Turn and tell your partner what’s so strange.
 - Wow-I think that’s a clue! Turn and talk about what clue we have and what it might mean.
 - Partner A, be Character 1 and Partner B, be Character 2. Act out this scene. Now what’s *really* going on?
 - This changes everything! Now who do you think did it?
 - How does this part fit with your theory of who did it?
- To ensure successful book clubs, it is important that the habits of rich book talk are modeled and practiced all yearlong during read aloud (turn and talk partners), shared reading (turn and talk partners), and reading partnerships.
- Share videotape of partners and clubs engaging in conversation. Have students identify the habits of book club members. Teachers can videotape effective book clubs or share professional videos. (Teachers College has several book club videos available <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/common-core-standards/ccs-videos.html>.)
- It is recommended that students work effectively in partnerships before working in larger groups. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers gradually move from partnerships to clubs. Some students, for example, may work in a partnership (or a book club of 2) rather than a larger group.
- Book clubs can range from 2-4 students but shouldn’t exceed that amount to allow for all students multiple opportunities to share. Some students may benefit from working in a partnership rather than

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a club during this unit. Within a class, there may be students in groups of 2, 3 and 4 – all groups can be referred to as book clubs.

- Book clubs typically meet two or three days a week as students need time to read and prepare.
- Confer into book clubs to raise the quality of book talk.
- Create an ongoing anchor chart of conversational prompts (e.g., initiate conversations, keep the conversation going, question and deepen the talk).
- Group students together for clubs considering interests, level, behaviors, etc.
- Students should spend part of the reading workshop reading their independent just right fiction texts to build reading stamina.
- Meet with guided reading groups consistently as a way to differentiate reading instruction for all students.
- Teachers are encouraged to share copies of short typed texts they use for shared reading and/or independent reading with district colleagues. To share/view texts go to eChalk.
- **To view Grade 4 archived artifacts for the unit please visit the Grade 4 reading/writing page. Select “Resources” from the top nav bar. To access the units of study website use the link http://ww3.mamkschools.org/units_of_study/.**
- Additional resources of sample anchor charts for reading and writing units of study include the following: <http://readingandwritingproject.com/resources/classroom-charts/third-eighth-grade.html>.

Professional Resources

What professional resources will be helpful in planning the unit?

- *The Common Core Lesson Book K-5* by Gretchen Owocki
- *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project 4th Grade Reading Curriculum Calendar 2010-2011*
- *Reading and Writing Literary Genres* by Kathleen Buss and Lee Karnowski
- *Fourth Grade Readers: Units of Study to Help* by Martha Heller-Winokur and Marcia Uretsky (Chapter 2)
- *Grand Conversations: Literature Groups in Action* by Ralph Peterson and Maryann Eeds
- *Comprehension Through Conversation* by Maria Nichols
- *Talking About Text: Guiding Students to Increase Comprehension Through Purposeful Talk* by Maria Nichols
- *Teaching for Comprehension and Fluency* by Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell
- *The Next Step in Guided Reading: Focused Assessments and Targeted Lessons for Helping Every Student Become a Better Reader* by Jan Richardson