

Become a Reading Detective!

Materials Needed: Short, age-appropriate mystery story (like Encyclopedia Brown or a similar reading-level mystery), notebook or paper, pencil, optional: printable 'Detective Notes' graphic organizer, optional: magnifying glass prop for fun.

Lesson Activities:

1. Introduction: What is a Mystery? (5 minutes)

Ask the student: "What do you think makes a story a mystery? What does a detective do?" Discuss their ideas. Introduce the idea that readers act like detectives, looking for clues in the text to solve the story's puzzle.

2. Shared Reading: The Case Begins! (15-20 minutes)

Read the chosen short mystery story aloud together. Pause at key moments:

- After the mystery/problem is introduced. Ask: "What's the big question we need to answer?"
- When clues are presented. Ask: "Hmm, that seems like an important piece of information. Let's note it down as a clue." (Use notebook or graphic organizer).
- Before the solution is revealed. Ask: "Based on the clues we have, what do you predict will happen? Who do you think did it? Why?"

3. Detective Talk: Analyzing the Evidence (10 minutes)

After reading, discuss the story using mystery vocabulary:

- "What was the main mystery or problem?"
- "Who were the main characters? Was there a detective?"
- "What were the most important clues?" (Review notes).
- "Were there any suspects? Did anyone have an alibi?"
- "Was our prediction correct? How was the mystery solved?"
- "Did the author try to trick us (red herrings - introduce if appropriate)?"

4. Independent Investigation: Your Turn! (10-15 minutes)

Choose one option:

- **Clue Collector:** Have the student re-read a section of the story and list all the clues they can find on their own.
- **Plot Mapper:** Ask the student to draw 3-4 simple pictures showing the beginning (problem), middle (key clue/event), and end (solution) of the story.
- **Mystery Endings:** Cover the ending of the story before reading it. Have the student write or draw their own ending based on the clues gathered.

5. Case Closed: Wrap-up (5 minutes)

Review what makes a story a mystery (puzzle, clues, solution). Praise the student's detective skills in finding clues and making predictions. Ask: "What was your favorite part about solving the reading mystery today?"

Assessment:

Observe student participation in discussions. Review their collected clues, plot map, or alternative ending for understanding of story elements and use of textual evidence. Check their ability to define/use mystery vocabulary during the discussion.

Differentiation:

- **Support:** Use a story with very clear clues. Provide sentence starters for predictions ("I predict... because..."). Use a pre-filled graphic organizer with some clues already listed.
- **Challenge:** Use a slightly more complex story with subtle clues or a red herring. Have the student write a paragraph explaining how the clues led to the solution. Ask them to identify the 'red herring' if applicable.