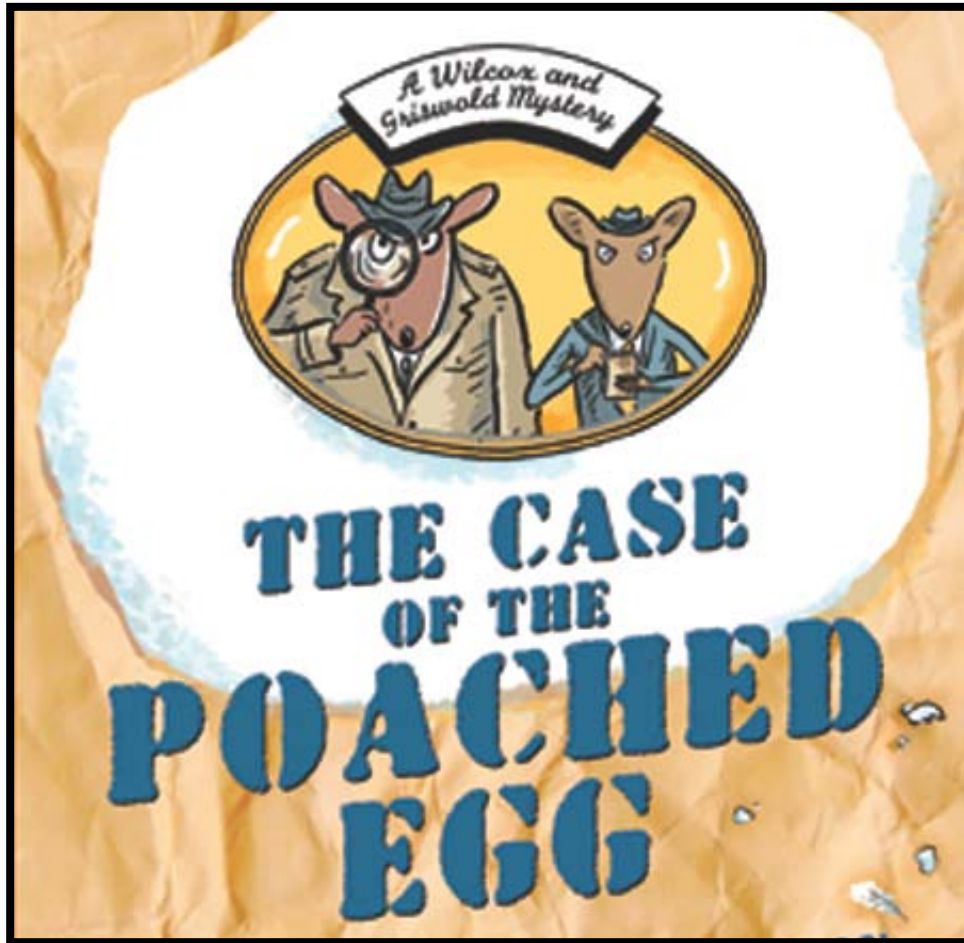


Curriculum Guide

A Wilcox & Griswold Mystery: The Case of the Poached Egg by Robin Newman,
illustrated by Deborah Zemke



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Lexile level 500L, Guided Reading Level M, Grade Level Equivalent 2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.3,3a,4,4a,4b,4c,4d,5,5a,5b

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.2.3,3d,3e,3f,4,4a,4c

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,10

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.1,1b,1c,2,4,6

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.3,5,6,8

Logical thinking, deductive reasoning, figurative language, idioms, hyperbole, metaphor

Elements of a mystery:

To write a mystery, you first need a crime. Then you need suspects, alibis, motives, and clues.

Make a chart of the suspects in *The Case of the Poached Egg*. Who is the most suspicious? Why?

What are the possible motives?

What are the suspects' alibis or explanations?

What are the physical clues (like footprints, eggshells, notes)?

How do the detectives solve the crime? What clues matter most to them?

Write your own mystery:

Start by writing a simple crime (a theft, for example). Now you know who did it and what the motive was. Write or draw a short description of your criminal. Make this person distinctive and interesting.

Now we go backwards and turn this into a mystery.

First: write about the discovery of the crime. Who discovers it? How?

Imagine other possible culprits. These will be your suspects. Describe in words or pictures two or three suspects who could have committed the crime (besides the real crook).

Figure out what kind of clues you want to have. Some should be “red herrings,” clues that turn out to be distractions or point to the wrong suspects. Make a list of three or four clues, some of which point to the real criminal, some of which point to your other suspects.

Create your detective. Who do you want your detective to be? Robin Newman, the author of *The Case of the Poached Egg*, has two detectives, both mice. One does all the talking, the other communicates by making faces. What kinds of personalities do Wilcox and Griswold have? What character traits do you think a detective needs to have? Patience? Determination? Cleverness? Does a detective need to be strong, fast, powerful?

Now that you have a detective (or two), bring them on the case by having whoever discovered the crime call or meet with them.

Describe how your detective examines clues, talks to suspects, collects information. Make a chart of suspects, clues, alibis, and motives, like you did for *The Case of the Poached Egg*. Use the chart to guide you as you write about how your detective figures out who could have done the crime.

Finally, the big reveal! Write the end to your mystery with the detective solving the crime.

Figurative language:

The Case of the Poached Egg uses a lot of food puns and idioms. Make a list of all the ones you can find and describe the double meanings (like “bacon is fried” can mean that you're cooking breakfast meats or that you're in trouble).

Invent your own food puns. Have fun playing with language! “That's the way the cookie crumbles” can become “That's the way the cookie stumbles. . . or mumbles. . . or fumbles.”

Play with idioms by making up your own sayings. Think of a common cliché and turn it into something new. For example, instead of “That's the way the cookie crumbles,” you could say, “That's the way the sock unravels.” Or “That's the way the snowflake melts.” You're looking for an expression that gives the image of something falling apart.

Activities:

Make your own composite sketches: one way detectives track down suspects is they have an artist draw a picture from a witness' description. Pair off into teams of witnesses and police artists. The witness should start by describing the suspect's face shape, then the nose, mouth, eyes, eyebrows, hair, any distinguishing marks like freckles, scars, bandaids. Once the drawing is finished, the artist should check with the witness. Does it look like the suspect? Why or why not?

See what happens when a witness gives the same description to two different police artists. Do the drawings look the same?

How reliable do you think witnesses are?

Have somebody new walk into the classroom, make a brief announcement, then walk out. Ask your students to write down or draw everything they remember about the person and what they said. Do people agree on what the person wore? How they looked? What they said?