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"The Lost Library" Lesson Plan Guide

by Rebecca Stead and Wendy Mass

Unit Overview

Duration: 3 weeks

Grade Level: 3-5

Subject Integration: ELA, Social Studies, Community Studies, Research Skills

Essential Question: How can investigating the past help us understand and appreciate our present community?

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Analyze mystery elements and track clues throughout a narrative
- Understand the importance of libraries and community gathering spaces
- Explore themes of community history, memory, and preservation
- Develop research and investigation skills through character modeling
- Make connections between literature and local community resources
- Practice respectful inquiry and interview techniques
- Express understanding through collaborative and individual projects

WEEK 1: Mystery Introduction and Community Context

Day 1: Introduction to Mystery Genre and Community Libraries

Objective: Introduce mystery elements and activate prior knowledge about libraries

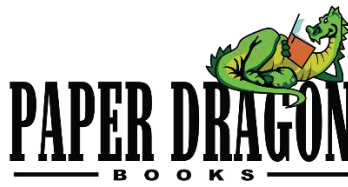
Materials: Mystery genre chart, photos of various libraries, little free library examples

Opening (10 minutes)

- Quick-write: "What makes a good mystery story?"
- Share examples and create class mystery elements chart

Main Activity (30 minutes)

1. **Mystery Genre Exploration** (15 minutes)
 - Identify key elements: clues, investigation, resolution
 - Discuss role of detectives/investigators in mysteries
 - Preview: How can young people be good investigators?
2. **Library Appreciation Activity** (15 minutes)
 - Show images of different types of libraries (traditional, modern, little free libraries)



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- Discuss: What role do libraries play in communities?
- Introduction to little free libraries concept

Closing (5 minutes)

- Predict what kind of mystery might involve libraries
- Assign reading: Opening chapters

Assessment: Mystery elements understanding, library appreciation discussion

Day 2: Meeting the Characters and Setting

Objective: Analyze characters and establish setting foundation

Materials: Character analysis worksheet, setting description chart

Opening (10 minutes)

- Partner share: "What did you learn about the two main characters?"

Main Activity (30 minutes)

1. **Character Analysis** (20 minutes)
 - Create character profiles for both boys
 - Focus on: What makes them good investigation partners?
 - Identify character strengths that will help with mystery-solving
2. **Setting and Community Context** (10 minutes)
 - Map the story setting and important locations
 - Discuss how the community setting affects the story
 - Connect to students' own communities

Closing (5 minutes)

- Exit ticket: "What questions would you want to ask about a mysterious little free library?"

Homework: Read next chapters, track any clues discovered

Assessment: Character analysis accuracy, setting understanding

Day 3: The Mystery Begins

Objective: Track initial clues and develop investigation skills

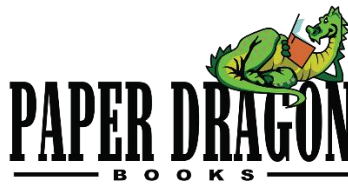
Materials: Clue tracking sheet, investigation notebook template

Opening (5 minutes)

- Quick discussion: "What seems mysterious about the little free library?"

Main Activity (35 minutes)

1. **Clue Documentation** (20 minutes)
 - Begin class clue tracking chart



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- Students create individual investigation notebooks
- Identify what makes information a "clue" vs. just interesting

2. Investigation Strategy Discussion (15 minutes)

- Analyze how the boys approach their investigation
- Discuss respectful ways to ask questions and gather information
- Connect to research skills students will need

Closing (5 minutes)

- Preview next reading assignment
- Encourage students to notice investigation techniques

Assessment: Clue identification accuracy, investigation strategy understanding

Days 4-5: Building the Investigation

Objective: Track mystery development and character collaboration

Materials: Collaboration analysis sheet, mystery progress chart

Structure for Each Day:

- **Opening (10 min):** Investigation journal updates—students record new clues and theories
- **Main Activity (25 min):** Literature circles focusing on investigation techniques and friendship development
- **Closing (10 min):** Theory sharing and evidence discussion

Reading Assignments: Continue through middle chapters **Assessment:** Investigation journal quality, collaboration analysis

WEEK 2: Historical Connections and Research Skills

Day 6: Discovering the Past

Objective: Explore themes of community history and memory

Materials: Timeline template, historical investigation worksheet

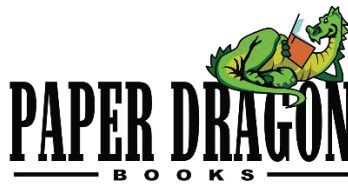
Opening (10 minutes)

- Discuss: "Why might it be important to learn about events that happened before you were born?"

Main Activity (30 minutes)

1. Historical Connection Analysis (20 minutes)

- Track how the boys discover information about the library fire
- Create timeline connecting past events to present mystery
- Discuss: How do past events affect present communities?



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2. Community Memory Discussion (10 minutes)

- Explore why communities preserve memories of both happy and sad events
- Connect to local community history examples
- Discuss role of storytelling in preserving memory

Closing (5 minutes)

- Share one thing students would want to remember about their current community

Assessment: Timeline accuracy, understanding of historical connections

Day 7: Research and Interview Skills

Objective: Analyze effective research and respectful inquiry techniques

Materials: Interview preparation worksheet, research strategy guide

Opening (5 minutes)

- Review how characters gather information from community members

Main Activity (35 minutes)

1. Research Strategy Analysis (20 minutes)

- Identify different ways the boys gather information
- Discuss what makes questions respectful and productive
- Practice formulating good investigative questions

2. Interview Skills Practice (15 minutes)

- Role-play interview scenarios based on story situations
- Emphasize listening skills and follow-up questions
- Connect to real research students might do

Closing (5 minutes)

- Exit ticket: "What's one important rule for respectfully asking people about the past?"

Assessment: Research strategy understanding, interview skill demonstration

Day 8: Community Connections and Collaboration

Objective: Examine themes of community support and teamwork

Materials: Community connection web, teamwork analysis chart

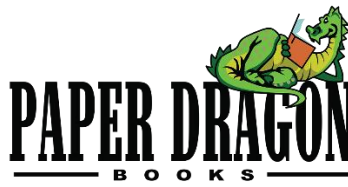
Opening (10 minutes)

- Think-pair-share: "How do community members help the boys in their investigation?"

Main Activity (30 minutes)

1. Community Support Analysis (20 minutes)

- Map how different community members contribute to solving the mystery
- Discuss what motivates people to help with the investigation
- Explore intergenerational connections in the story



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2. Collaboration Skills Review (10 minutes)

- Analyze how the boys work effectively together
- Identify specific collaboration strategies they use
- Connect to classroom collaboration skills

Closing (5 minutes)

- Share examples of helpful community members from students' own experiences

Assessment: Community connection mapping, collaboration analysis

Days 9-10: Mystery Resolution Approaches

Objective: Track final investigation steps and prepare for resolution

Follow similar structure with focus on:

- How accumulated clues lead toward solution
- Character growth through the investigation process
- Community impact of uncovering the truth
- Preparation for story conclusion

WEEK 3: Resolution and Real-World Applications

Day 11: Mystery Resolution and Character Growth

Objective: Analyze story conclusion and character development

Materials: Resolution analysis worksheet, character growth chart

Opening (10 minutes)

- Complete final reading
- Initial reactions to mystery solution

Main Activity (30 minutes)

1. Mystery Solution Analysis (15 minutes)

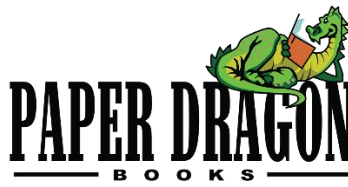
- Review how clues led to the final revelation
- Discuss: Was the resolution satisfying? Why or why not?
- Evaluate the boys' investigation process

2. Character Development Assessment (15 minutes)

- Compare characters at beginning vs. end of story
- Identify how the investigation changed them
- Discuss what they learned beyond just solving the mystery

Closing (5 minutes)

- Quick-write: "What's the most important thing the boys learned during their investigation?"



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Assessment: Resolution analysis quality, character growth understanding

Day 12: Community History Project Introduction

Objective: Apply story themes to local community investigation

Materials: Project guidelines, research planning sheets

Project Options:

1. **Local Library History:** Research the history of your school or community library
2. **Community Timeline:** Create timeline of important events in your town/city
3. **Little Free Library Design:** Plan and design a little free library for your school or community
4. **Community Helper Interviews:** Interview people who preserve local history (librarians, historical society members, etc.)
5. **Neighborhood Investigation:** Research the history of your school's neighborhood

Structure:

- **Opening** (10 min): Project explanation and research planning
- **Work Time** (30 min): Research planning and initial investigation
- **Closing** (5 min): Project plan sharing

Assessment: Research plan quality, connection to story themes

Day 13: Research and Investigation Day

Objective: Apply investigation skills learned from the story

Materials: Research materials, interview preparation guides

Opening (5 minutes)

- Review respectful research and interview guidelines

Main Activity (35 minutes)

- Individual and partner research work
- Practice interview skills with preparation for real interviews
- Teacher support for research strategies and source evaluation

Closing (5 minutes)

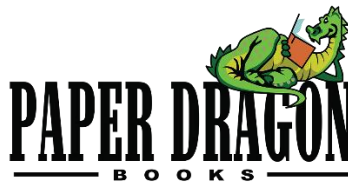
- Progress check and problem-solving assistance

Assessment: Research progress, effective use of investigation skills

Day 14: Project Sharing and Community Connections

Objective: Share discoveries and connect to broader community themes

Materials: Presentation materials, community connection chart



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Opening (5 minutes)

- Presentation guidelines and supportive audience expectations

Main Activity (35 minutes)

- Student project presentations (4-5 minutes each)
- Focus on discoveries made and connections to story themes
- Discussion of how investigations revealed new community appreciation

Closing (5 minutes)

- Reflection: "How did investigating your community change your understanding of it?"

Assessment: Presentation quality, community connection insights

Day 15: Unit Reflection and Real-World Applications

Objective: Synthesize learning and plan ongoing community engagement

Materials: Reflection prompts, action planning sheet

Opening (10 minutes)

- Small group discussion: "What are the main messages of this story?"

Main Activity (30 minutes)

1. **Theme Synthesis** (15 minutes)
 - Identify major themes with evidence from text and projects
 - Connect story lessons to real community engagement
 - Discuss ongoing ways to appreciate and support community resources
2. **Action Planning** (15 minutes)
 - Students identify ways they can continue supporting libraries and community history
 - Create class list of community appreciation activities
 - Plan possible field trips or community service projects

Closing (5 minutes)

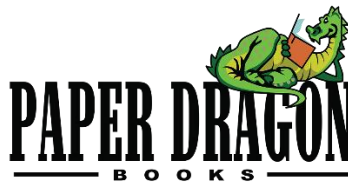
- Unit reflection writing: "How has this story changed your thinking about your community?"

Assessment: Theme synthesis quality, thoughtful action planning

Assessment Rubric

Reading Comprehension (25%)

- **Exceeds:** Demonstrates deep understanding of mystery elements, character development, and themes
- **Meets:** Shows solid comprehension with adequate text evidence



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- **Approaching:** Basic understanding with some support needed
- **Below:** Limited comprehension of story elements

Mystery Analysis Skills (25%)

- **Exceeds:** Effectively tracks clues, makes logical inferences, and evaluates investigation techniques
- **Meets:** Identifies main clues and understands investigation process
- **Approaching:** Recognizes some mystery elements with guidance
- **Below:** Limited understanding of mystery structure

Community Connection (25%)

- **Exceeds:** Makes meaningful connections between story and local community, shows deep appreciation for community resources
- **Meets:** Understands story's community themes and makes some local connections
- **Approaching:** Basic understanding of community themes
- **Below:** Minimal connection to community concepts

Research and Investigation Skills (25%)

- **Exceeds:** Demonstrates effective research techniques, asks thoughtful questions, shows respectful inquiry approach
- **Meets:** Uses basic research skills appropriately and shows respect for sources
- **Approaching:** Attempts research with support and guidance
- **Below:** Limited research skill demonstration

Differentiation Strategies

For Struggling Readers:

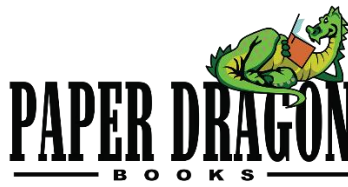
- Audio support for challenging sections
- Graphic organizers for tracking clues and character development
- Partner reading opportunities
- Simplified research project options with more scaffolding

For Advanced Readers:

- Independent research projects on community history or library science
- Leadership roles in group investigations
- Extended analysis of historical research methods
- Mentoring roles for struggling readers

For English Language Learners:

- Visual supports for mystery elements and community concepts
- Native language discussion opportunities when possible



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- Collaborative research projects with strong peer support
- Cultural connections to different community traditions

For Students with Different Learning Needs:

- Multiple project format options (visual, oral, hands-on)
- Flexible timeline for research completion
- Choice in how to demonstrate understanding
- Varied grouping strategies for different activities

Materials List

- Class set of "The Lost Library"
- Chart paper and markers for tracking clues and themes
- Research planning templates
- Access to library resources for community research
- Interview preparation guides
- Maps of local community for geography connections

Extension Activities

Home Connections:

- Family interviews about community history and favorite libraries
- Family visits to local libraries or little free libraries
- Research family members' experiences with community institutions
- Creation of family library corner or book-sharing tradition

Community Service:

- Donate books to little free libraries or community centers
- Volunteer at local libraries (age-appropriate activities)
- Create thank-you cards for librarians and community history keepers
- Organize book drives for underserved community areas

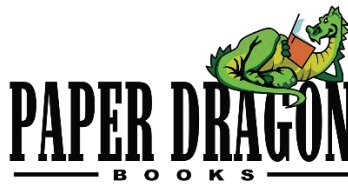
Cross-Curricular Connections

Social Studies:

- Study local community history and founding
- Explore how communities preserve important memories
- Research the role of libraries in different cultures and time periods
- Investigate community planning and civic responsibility

Research Skills:

- Practice using library catalog systems and databases



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- Learn to evaluate source reliability and credibility
- Develop note-taking and information organization skills
- Practice respectful interviewing and information gathering

Geography:

- Map important community locations and their histories
- Study how geography influences community development
- Explore transportation and communication changes over time
- Connect local geography to story settings

Real-World Applications

Community Engagement:

- Visit local historical societies or museums
- Attend library programs and community events
- Participate in community service projects
- Learn about local government and civic participation

Information Literacy:

- Practice research skills using age-appropriate sources
- Learn to distinguish between reliable and unreliable information
- Develop skills for respectful information gathering
- Practice organizing and presenting research findings

Civic Responsibility:

- Understand the importance of community institutions
- Learn ways young people can support community resources
- Develop appreciation for community helpers and volunteers
- Practice being respectful and engaged community members