"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

Standards Alignment

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1**: Refer to details and examples when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3**: Describe characters, settings, and events using specific details from the text
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1**: Write opinion pieces supporting a point of view with reasons and information
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1**: Engage effectively in collaborative discussions
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.7**: Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation

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)
   - 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
   - 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
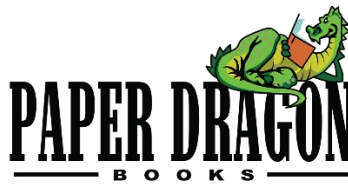**Materials**: Collaboration analysis sheet, mystery progress chart
Structure for Each Day:
- **Opening** (10 min): Investigation journal updates—students record new clues and theories
- **Main Activity** (25 min): Literature circles focusing on investigation techniques and friendship development
- **Closing** (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?

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
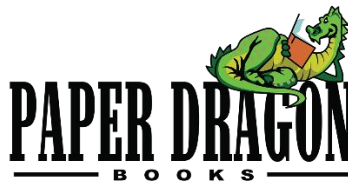   - Practice formulating good investigative questions

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
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

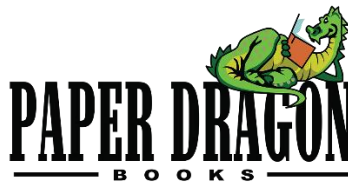**Objective**: Analyze story conclusion and character development

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)

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

2. **Character Development Assessment** (15 minutes)
   - o   Compare characters at beginning vs. end of story
   - o   Identify how the investigation changed them
   - o   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?"

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

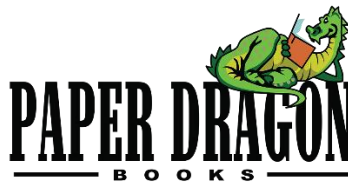**Day 13: Research and Investigation Day**

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

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
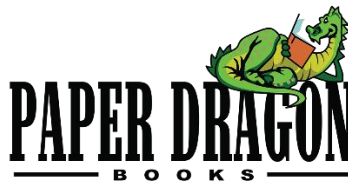
Materials: Reflection prompts, action planning sheet

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
- **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
- 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
- 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