

Lesson 2: Writing a Mystery

Lesson Focus: Organizing and Planning a Mystery
Theme: Mysteries

Objectives

Your child will:

- Organize details of a story to write a mystery.
- Write about a mystery and tell how the problem is solved.
- Continue to improve spelling skills.

Advance Prep

- Activity Set 2:2 *Super Speller!* (see p. 26)
- Activity Set 2:3 *Sentence strips*
- Activity Set 2:8 *Fingerprint Detective Kit*

Materials

Guided Writing Practice

- Tablet or chart paper and markers
- *Details Wheel* from Lesson 1
- *Super Speller!*
- Pointers

Pre-writing Activities

- Picture book about a mystery (see Appendix, p. 234 for suggestions)
- Manila file folder
- Blank computer or copy paper
- *Details Wheel*
- Markers or crayons, including red
- Stapler

Brainstorming

- Index cards (or pocket chart with prepared sentence strips)
- Paper magnifying glasses and prepared sentence strips from Lesson 1
- Plastic magnifying glass (optional)
- *Story Ideas File Box* from Lesson 1 (optional)
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors



The Writing Project

- Grade-level writing paper
- Pencils, crayons, or markers

Editing and Revising

- Editing buddy
- Plastic magnifying glass (optional)
- Dictionary and *Super Speller!*

The Student Workbook

- Pencils, crayons, or markers
- Scissors, stapler

Publishing the Project

- Manila file folder
- Markers or crayons, including red
- Stapler

Want to Do More? (optional activities)

- Writing Across the Curriculum
 - ~ Old lunch box (a shoe box will work)
 - ~ Stickers or paint
 - ~ Baby powder or cornstarch
 - ~ Soft, downy feather (from feather duster or craft store)
 - ~ Black construction paper
 - ~ Small envelope
 - ~ Clear tape
 - ~ Plastic magnifying glass
 - ~ Small tube of petroleum jelly or ointment
 - ~ White crayon
 - ~ Scissors
 - ~ Cookies and milk
- Computer Capers
 - ~ PowerPoint computer program

ACTIVITY SET 2:1

Lesson Overview

Children love mysteries! As you and your child explore the theme of mysteries, Lesson 2 will help her think about how to develop her own mystery stories by thinking of a problem, developing clues, and reaching a solution.

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:1

- Lesson Overview
- Activity Set Worksheet

Activity Set Worksheet: "Mini Story Detective File"

Remove the Lesson 2 "Mini Story Detective File" page from your Activity Set Worksheet Pack.

Mini Story Detective File

Name: _____

Write down ideas for a new mystery.
Cut out each box.
Staple the pages together into a book.

Title	Character
Setting	Problem
Solution	Beginning
Middle	End

Activity Page

1. Read the instructions together with your child. Discuss ideas about the details of a mystery.
2. Because the lines are so small, have her dictate to you as you write her ideas on the blanks.
3. Help her cut out the squares and staple them together into a miniature book.

Writing a Mystery

If you prefer, your child may complete this next part during Activity Set 2:6.

Use the "Mini Story Detective File" to introduce your child to writing a mystery.

1. On a separate piece of grade-level writing paper, encourage your child to use the ideas from the miniature book to write a mystery.
2. Praise her for her efforts to write independently. Do not edit or revise her writing because this is an opportunity for her to practice writing a mystery on her own.

ACTIVITY SET 2:2

Guided Writing Practice

Continue with daily Guided Writing Practice, resisting the temptation to skip it. It's an important warm-up to each day's writing activity. Lesson 2 will use Guided Writing Practice to introduce the concept of writing a mystery.

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:2

- Guided Writing Practice
- Pre-writing Activities

Advance Prep

If you are new to WriteShop Primary, prepare a *Super Speller!* for your child to refer to during Guided Writing Practice. If you have room on a wall of your writing center, you might want to put up a *Word Wall Super Speller!* But if space is at a premium, make a *Portable Word Bank Super Speller!* instead. See pp. 26-28 for details and instructions.

Directions

Sit side-by-side with your child and write on a tablet. Or, use an easel with chart paper. Model writing for her as explained in the Introduction (pp. 15-17), sharing the marker so she writes some of the words that she knows. Spend no more than 15 minutes.

Note: If you will be using the *Portable Word Bank Super Speller!*, display the word list for your child to see. If you plan to use a *Word Wall Super Speller!* or pocket chart, sit next to it as you write.

1. Show your child the *Details Wheel* from Lesson 1. Tell her you will be using the *Details Wheel* again to be a Story Detective and learn how to write mysteries. The *Details Wheel* will help her decide on the details she needs in order to plan the mystery.
2. Explain that a mystery is a story where the main character:
 - Has a problem.
 - Works to find the solution.
 - Does this by gathering clues from the details presented in the *beginning, middle, and end* of the story.

Ideas for mysteries include:

- *Who stole the dog bone from the dog's bowl?* (The cat likes dog bones, too!)
- *A bike is missing from the bike rack.* (The owner forgot he left it at a different bike rack.)
- *There's a shoe store where there should be a pet store.* (The shopper wrote down the wrong address.)

“I was surprised with how
painless it is to write a mystery.”

– Mary, FL

- *Did someone take Dad's keys?* (He left them inside the car.)
 - *Mom's sunglasses are missing.* (They're on her head.)
 - *There are strange footprints in the mud/snow/grass.* (The neighbor climbed the fence to find a lost ball.)
 - *There's trash in the yard every morning.* (A raccoon has been raiding the garbage bin at night.)
3. Use the *Details Wheel* to discuss all the details you would like to write about in the mystery. After your discussion, write the mystery on the chart paper.
 - You'll probably find that it's hard to write a short mystery! Do your best to help your child keep Guided Writing Practice to about 10 sentences or so.
 - If necessary, divide the story into two or three short paragraphs. Indent the first line of every paragraph.
 - Skip every other line as you write to allow space for going back and adding more information your child might want to include.
 - Encourage using sentences with a variety of ending punctuation.
 - Share the marker occasionally so your child can write some of the words she knows.
 4. If she includes dialogue, explain or review **quotation marks**.
 - Quotation marks set off the words a character is speaking.
 - Quotation marks are usually placed after the ending punctuation. For example:
 - ~ "Something is wrong!" Emma said.
 - ~ "It sounds like a mystery," said Jonah.
 - ~ Mom asked, "Will you help me find my glasses?"
 5. Encourage the importance of using standard spelling.
 - Suggest that your child refer to her *Super Speller!*—either the *Word Wall* or *Portable Word Bank*, whichever you've chosen—to help her correctly write a few words on the paper.
 - Add new words to the *Super Speller!* that she wants to write but doesn't know how to spell. Sound out unfamiliar words together and look them up in the dictionary before writing them correctly on the list.
 - Take care not to overwhelm your child by pointing out too many spelling errors. Instead, introduce new words to the *Super Speller!* gradually, adding just one or two at a time (especially in the beginning).
 - Training your child to refer to the *Super Speller!* helps her transition from looking to you for the answer, to learning to use standard reference tools herself to improve her writing.
 6. Check to make sure your mystery includes as many of the main story ingredients as possible to fit the story you are writing: *characters, setting (place), setting (time), problem, solution, beginning, middle, and end*. Write the title at the top.

See p. 66 for an example of a completed Guided Writing Practice.

The Case of the Missing Sunglasses

Mom was in a big hurry, but she couldn't find her sunglasses. She looked in her purse. She looked on the kitchen counter. She even looked in the car to see if she left them on the seat. Mom's sunglasses had disappeared! Finally, she called me. "Ginny, I need a detective to help me find my glasses," she said. I looked at Mom and I started to laugh. "They are on top of your head!" Mom started laughing too. She was glad to have a detective for a daughter!

Dialogues and prompts are an important part of Guided Writing Practice. If your child can't think of what to say, write sentence starters for her to complete, or prompt her with questions such as *who*, *where*, or *how*. Writing sentence starters will also help a wordy child use fewer sentences.

Here's an example of a guided discussion:

You: Let's use our Details Wheel to plan a mystery about the time I lost my sunglasses. Can you think of a sentence to begin our story? What happened that day?

Child: You were in a big hurry but you couldn't find your sunglasses.

You: That will make a great beginning. But since I will be the main character, you need to name me: Mom. So, say this: "Mom was in a big hurry, but she . . . (but she what?)"

Child: Mom was in a big hurry, but she couldn't find her sunglasses.

You: Super! See? That tells us the "Who?"—who the main character is in our story and also the "What?"—what the problem, or the mystery, is. Now tell me some things about the setting. Where did Mom look for her glasses?

Child: She looked in her purse and on the counter and in the car.

You: Can you make that a sentence about the purse? She looked . . .

Child: She looked in her purse. (Write the sentence together, sharing the marker. Be sure to skip lines.)

You: Good. Where else did she look?

Child: She looked on the kitchen counter.

*You: Let's write that down. She looked on the kitchen counter. (Write the sentence.)
Did she find them?*

Child: No. She even looked in the car to see if she left them on the seat.

You: Ginny, that's a great sentence. Let's write it together.

Do you realize that you have told us the "Where?" part of the story? Where did the story take place?

Child: At home.

You: How will the reader know it was at home?

Child: Because you looked on the kitchen counter, and that's in our home.

You: *Yes! That's right. See how smart you are?*

(Continue gently guiding and prompting your child in this manner until finished.)

Invite your child to choose a pointer to point to each word as you once more read the sentences together. Ask her to:

- Point to and identify the *beginning, middle, and end* of the story.
- Point to the indented first sentence (or sentences, if there is more than one paragraph.)
- Point to each punctuation mark and identify how it is used.

You will use the *Details Wheel* to plan the Guided Writing Practice mystery story each day of Lesson 2.

Parents Say:

My son tended to ruin the suspense of the mystery by starting each story with too much information. I explained that in the beginning you learn about the mystery, in the middle the character gets clues, and in the end, he solves the mystery.

Pre-writing Activities

Picture Book about a Mystery

Today, read a picture book about a mystery to your child.

Parents Say:

After reading our picture book, I like to introduce the theme of the lesson to my child and discuss how the book uses the theme (such as mysteries) to make the story happen. For example:

- *How did the theme of this lesson show itself?*
 - *Was the mystery or detective theme important in this story? Why or why not?*
 - *If we change the setting, would the story have made sense? Would it have been better? What other location might have worked?*
 - *What was the beginning, middle, and end of the story?*
 - *Are previous themes (such as time) included in this story?*
-



Top Secret Detective File

Explain that you will be making another detective file together that contains “top secret” information about the mystery you just read.

1. Give your child a sheet of blank computer paper. On the top half of the paper, have her illustrate a picture from the book you just read. On the bottom half, help her make a list of the top-secret details about the story:
 - Together, refer to the *Details Wheel* as your child writes down each of the story ingredients on her paper:
 - ~ *Who?* (the characters)
 - ~ *When?* (the setting/time)
 - ~ *Where?* (the setting/place)
 - ~ *What?* (the main problem)
 - ~ *Why or How?* (the solution)
 - ~ *Story Details* (the story's *beginning, middle, and end*)
 - Your child may write down the details, or she may dictate to you as you write each one down on the list.
 - Add the book title to the top of the page.
2. Add the paper to the same “Top Secret” folder you made during Activity Set 1:2.

“My son loves adding to his *Top Secret* file every time we do a new story. I honestly think this has become his favorite part of the lessons.”

– Tammy, FL

ACTIVITY SET 2:3

Guided Writing Practice

Lesson 2 will continue to use Guided Writing Practice to introduce the concept of writing a mystery. To review:

1. Choose a new idea for a mystery (see Activity Set 2:2 for suggestions). Use the *Details Wheel* to discuss all the details you would like to write about. After your discussion, write the mystery together.
 - Spend no more than 15 minutes. Try to write about 10 sentences.
 - Indent the first line of every paragraph.
 - Skip every other line as you write.
2. Continue to encourage the importance of using standard spelling.
 - Have your child refer to her *Word Wall Super Speller!* or *Portable Word Bank Super Speller!* to write words correctly on the paper.
 - Add new words to the *Super Speller!* that she wants to write but doesn't know how to spell. Sound out unfamiliar words together and look them up in the dictionary before writing them correctly on the list.
3. Check to make sure your mystery includes as many of the main story ingredients as possible to fit the story you are writing: *characters, setting, problem, solution, beginning, middle, and end*. Write the title at the top.

Here is an example of a completed Guided Writing Practice:

The Disappearing Pet Store

On Saturday, Lily saw Emma at the shoe store. Emma was carrying an empty bird cage. "Something is wrong!" Emma said. "I went to the pet store to buy a parrot, but the pet store is now a shoe store!"

Emma showed Lily a paper with an address. "See? The pet store should be at 1212 Park Street. But 1212 is a shoe store, not a pet store." Lily called the pet store. After she hung up, she told Emma, "Guess what? The pet store is at 1221 Park Street. It's across the street! The mystery is solved."

If your child can't think of what to say, write sentence starters for her to complete, or prompt her with questions such as *who, where, or how*. This will also help a wordy child use fewer sentences. Turn to p. 70 to see an example of a guided discussion.

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:3

- Guided Writing Practice
- Brainstorming

“This lesson is great! I like the time limits...We know not to spend an hour on one part.”

– Cheryl, NC

You: *When we used the Details Wheel, we decided to write a mystery about a girl named Emma who thought a pet store had disappeared. Her friend, Lily, helped solve the mystery. Let's think of a sentence to start the story that introduces the setting and the characters.*

Child: Lily and Emma were at the shoe store.

You: *Very good! That tells who the main characters are in our story and also where the story takes place. Let's add more details about the setting. Do you remember what we discussed when we used the Details Wheel? When did the girls go to the store?*

Child: On Saturday.

You: *Now let's put all that information into one sentence and write it down. On Saturday ... (Start to write the sentence, and then hand the marker to your child.)*

Child: On Saturday, Lily saw Emma at the shoe store. (Finish writing the sentence together.)

You: *Good. Now let's describe something about Emma because it can help us know what the problem will be in the story.*

Child: Emma has red hair and blue eyes and she has freckles.

You: *That's a great description of Emma! But is there something else that you can describe about Emma that could help give a clue about the problem? Maybe she could be carrying something.*

Child: She could be carrying a bird cage because she wants to buy a bird.

You: *Perfect. Now say that as our second sentence in the story.*

Child: Emma was carrying a bird cage. An empty bird cage.

You: *Let's write that as a complete sentence: Emma was carrying an empty bird cage.*

(Continue gently guiding and prompting your child in this manner until finished.)

Invite your child to choose a pointer to point to each word as you once more read the sentences together. Ask her to:

- Point to and identify the *beginning, middle, and end* of the story.
- Point to the indented first sentence (or sentences, if there is more than one paragraph).
- Point to each punctuation mark and identify how it is used.

Parents Say . . .

Since I do most of the writing during Guided Writing Practice, there's not much chance to use the Super Speller! So instead, we work on spelling later in the lesson—during the Writing Project and Editing and Revising.

Brainstorming – Planning the Parts of a Mystery

Advance Prep

If you have not been using a pocket chart, prepare the following activity on index cards that you and your child can manipulate on a flat desktop. If you are using a pocket chart, prepare it for today's lesson.

1. Use the five paper magnifying glasses you prepared in Lesson 1, along with the separate sentence strips: *Characters*, *Setting (Place)*, *Setting (Time)*, *Problem*, *Solution*, *Beginning*, *Middle*, *End*.
2. Place the sentence strip, *Story Detective*, at the top center of the pocket chart.
3. Along the left side of the pocket chart from top to bottom, display the magnifying glasses in a column.
4. Keep blank sentence strips or index cards available for writing ideas.

Directions

1. Sit down with your child at a flat surface, or if you are using the pocket chart, sit next to it. Explain to her that you will be planning the different parts of a mystery together. For added fun, give her a plastic magnifying glass to hold while you brainstorm together.
2. For the Writing Project, your child will be writing a mystery. Let her choose a topic. If she needs ideas to write about, use the *Story Ideas File Box* (see *Before You Begin Book C*, p. 30). Ask her to suggest a time for the story to take place. Help her write this on a sentence strip or index card and ask her to place it in the correct place on the pocket chart. (Next to the magnifying glass marked "When?")
3. Discuss various ideas for planning the mystery and choose one idea to write down and place in the pocket chart or tabletop for each detail. When finished, help your child sort the sentence strips you prepared in advance and place them in the corresponding pockets of the pocket chart. ("Character" next to "Who?" and "Setting" next to "When" and "Where," and so on.)
4. As you discuss details to write down, look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary. Write the correct spelling of each word on the *Super Speller!* for a handy reference as your child writes the Writing Project.
5. Write down ideas for a title and place these ideas at the top of the pocket chart or on the tabletop.

Parents Say:

We included plots as well as topics in our Story Ideas File Box. The ideas for mysteries on pp. 64-65 were great for sparking ideas!

ACTIVITY SET 2:4

Guided Writing Practice

If it is too much for your child to do Guided Writing and the Writing Project on the same day, you may skip Guided Writing Practice today. Otherwise, continue to practice writing a mystery, following the instructions and guidelines in Activity Set 2:2. When finished, do the pointer activities.

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:4

- Guided Writing Practice (optional)
- The Writing Project
- Smaller Steps or Flying Higher

The Writing Project – Writing a Mystery

For today's Writing Project, your child will pretend to be a Story Detective. Later, during Activity Set 2:7, she will assemble a *Top Secret File* about the mystery.

Directions

1. Don't forget to adjust the Writing Project for a younger or more reluctant writer by using Smaller Steps, or consider the Flying Higher activity if your advanced learner needs more of a challenge. (See p. 73.)
2. Have your child draw a simple picture of the characters in her mystery and write their names. Use the details you wrote down during Activity Set 2:3 (Brainstorming) as a guide.
3. Using grade-level writing paper, instruct her to write separate pages with a sentence or two for each detail of the mystery including: *characters, setting (place), setting (time), problem, solution, beginning, middle, and end*. A child who loves to draw may also illustrate each page if she wants.
4. The mystery should have a main character and a setting. It should begin with a problem and conclude with a solution to the problem. Guide your child with questions such as: "Does this character's action make sense given what has just happened?"
5. Have her use a separate piece of paper to write the mystery. As she writes, encourage her to refer to the pages she prepared. Though it's challenging to keep a mystery story from becoming too long, aim to keep it close to 10 or 12 sentences.

Parents Say . . .

To take the pressure off my reluctant artist, we cut our pictures from magazines and also used our own family photos.

Smaller Steps – Retelling a Familiar Mystery Story

A reluctant writer may feel more comfortable retelling a familiar story than trying to plan an original mystery of her own. Encourage her to retell the mystery you read during the Pre-writing Activity or another mystery she knows.

The important thing is that your child enjoys the process of storytelling. So if she seems at all reluctant to write by herself, you might try some of these ideas:

- After she narrates her story to you, let her copy it. Alternatively, dictate it back to her so she can write it down.
- Share the writing with her if writing the entire story is too overwhelming. Take turns writing, with each of you writing every other sentence.
- If that's still too much, try writing the sentence starters and let her finish the sentences.
- Or, ask her to write some of the words while you write *most* of them.

Flying Higher – Expanding Details in a Mystery

Challenge an accelerated student to add more details to her Writing Project. Describe the characters and the setting more fully. Expand the plot to include several short chapters. Read easy chapter book mysteries together as an example for her to follow.

ACTIVITY SET 2:5

Guided Writing Practice

Continue to practice writing a mystery, following the instructions and guidelines in Activity Set 2:2. Here is an example of a completed Guided Writing Practice:

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:5

- Guided Writing Practice
- Editing and Revising

Mystery of the Weeds and Seeds

Dad was not happy this morning. His rose garden had some strange weeds. They were not like the other weeds that grow in our yard. We never saw weeds like this before!

I helped Dad pull the weeds. While we were working, my sister came out to fill the bird feeder. Some of the bird seed spilled onto the dirt. Suddenly I had an idea. The weeds were growing from the bird seed! I solved the mystery, and Dad moved the bird feeder to the patio.

When finished, do the pointer activities.

Editing and Revising – Becoming a Story Detective

Invite your child to be a Story Detective, and ask her to choose one editing buddy from the supply of stuffed animals. Sit down with your child and the stuffed animal. Read her Writing Project story together, pretending to read it to her editing buddy.

1. Look through the pages she wrote about the details of the story. Is every detail included? If not, discuss what needs to be added.
2. Give your Story Detective a magnifying glass to use as you identify the main character and setting. Ask her if she would like to add more details about each one. Discuss ideas for improvement.
3. Talk about the story. Did your child write the *beginning*, *middle*, and *end* in such a way that the problem is solved? Does the mystery get solved with a satisfactory solution? Discuss ideas for improvement.
4. Circle any misspelled words. Look up each word in the dictionary or on the *Word Wall Super Speller!* or *Portable Word Bank Super Speller!*
5. Help your child revise her writing. Write the corrections in between the lines on the paper. She may rewrite her corrections on a new paper if she chooses.

Parents Say . . .

How could correcting one's mistakes be fun? I can sum it up in two words: editing buddies!

If your child is reluctant to mark up his original paper, type out his story to include all his errors (indentation, spelling, punctuation, capitalization) and let him edit that version.

We take it slowly and don't add all of the words to the Super Speller! that my son asks to spell, but just the words he misses without realizing it.

For us, the editing process seems easier if my child does it totally on her own without input from me. We came up with a checklist together with things to look for. Since she's older, she can handle it by herself.

ACTIVITY SET 2:6

Guided Writing Practice

Continue to practice writing a mystery, following the instructions and guidelines in Activity Set 2:2. When finished, do the pointer activities. Here is an example of a completed Guided Writing Practice:

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:6

- Guided Writing Practice
- Activity Set Worksheet

The Shrinking Sweatshirt

When Ella came home from our cousin Mya's house, she said, "My new blue sweatshirt doesn't fit anymore." Mom said, "Maybe Aunt Amy washed it and it shrank in the dryer."

The next day, we saw Aunt Amy and Mya at the store. Mya was wearing a baggy blue sweatshirt. Aunt Amy said, "I think Mya's sweatshirt got stretched out. It used to fit, but now it's too big." Suddenly, I said, "It didn't stretch out, Aunt Amy! Mya is wearing Ella's sweatshirt and Ella is wearing Mya's!" Everyone was happy that I solved the mystery of the shrinking sweatshirt.

Activity Set Worksheet: "Mini Story Detective File"

If your child did not write a mystery based on her Mini Story Detective File (Activity Set 2:1), have her do so today.

1. On a separate piece of grade-level writing paper, encourage your child to use the ideas from the miniature book to write a mystery.
2. Praise her for her efforts to write independently. Do not edit or revise her writing because this is an opportunity for her to practice writing a mystery on her own.

ACTIVITY SET 2:7

Guided Writing Practice

Continue to practice writing a mystery, following the instructions and guidelines in Activity Set 2:2. When finished, do the pointer activities.

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:7

- Guided Writing Practice (optional)
- Publishing the Project

Publishing the Project – Making a Top Secret File

Your child will be making a *Top Secret File* from the Writing Project story she wrote during Activity Set 2:4. (This file will be a variation on the one she made during Activity Set 2:2.)

1. Stack all the pages together with the story details on top and the completed story at the bottom. Place these pages inside a new file folder. Staple the pages to the folder across the top edge.
2. On the front of the folder write TOP SECRET in large red letters. Write the title on the tab.

ACTIVITY SET 2:8

Guided Writing Practice

If you choose to do Guided Writing Practice today, continue to practice using story ingredients to help plan a story, following the instructions and guidelines in Activity Set 2:2. When finished, do the pointer activities.

Evaluating the Student's Work

Use the Primary Writing Skills Evaluation Chart for Lessons 1-5 to evaluate your student's work.

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:8

- Guided Writing Practice (optional)
- Evaluating the Student's Work
- Want To Do More? (optional)
Writing Across the Curriculum
- Want To Do More? (optional)
Computer Capers

Want to Do More?

Writing Across the Curriculum: Spotlight on Science – Fingerprint Detective Kit

Advance Prep

Gather the following items to put inside an old lunch box or shoe box.

- Baby powder or cornstarch
- Soft, downy feather (will work better than a stiff one)
- Black construction paper cut into 3-inch squares (store in an envelope)
- Clear tape
- Plastic magnifying glass
- Small tube of petroleum jelly or ointment
- White crayon

Encourage your child to use stickers or paint to decorate the box to hold the equipment. Be sure to write TOP SECRET to scare away any spies!

Your child can make a *Fingerprint Detective Kit* to collect scientific clues for a new mystery. Every person has a unique fingerprint—no two are alike! Your child can use this scientific information to help solve a mystery.

Practice collecting fingerprints. Here's how:

1. Grease your child's thumb with ointment. Instruct her to press her thumb firmly down on a clear, flat surface such as a glass table or smooth countertop.

“ [My son] was very excited about the idea of the fingerprint kit!”

—Rebecca, CA

2. Next, shake a bit of baby powder over the place she touched (baby powder tends to work better than cornstarch). Show her how to gently brush the powder across the area with the feather until she sees a thumbprint appear.
3. Press a piece of clear tape over the print, lift up the tape, and stick the tape to a square of black construction paper.
4. Have her label the black paper to identify her own fingerprint by writing her name with white crayon.
5. Examine the print with the magnifying glass and note any important details.

Now she's ready to solve a mystery! To collect important clues, set out a glass or ceramic plate of two cookies and a cup of milk and leave the room. When the cookies and milk disappear, collect fingerprints from the plate and cup. Then collect fingerprints from her suspects and compare the results.

When finished, have your child write a story about the disappearing cookies and how the mystery was solved.

Computer Capers – Using PowerPoint to Plan a Story

Use PowerPoint to create a slideshow to help your child write a story.

1. On each slide, write a different part of a story: *character, setting, problem, solution, beginning, middle, and end.*
2. For each part, list several examples. For instance, on the first slide write:

Character:

Mouse

Bird

T Rex


3. After it is prepared, sit with your child to watch the slideshow. Read each slide together and have her select which choice she would like to use in a story.
4. When finished, help her type the story on the computer. Add clipart and print.

Mini Story Detective File

Name: _____



Write down ideas for a new mystery.
Cut out each box.
Staple the pages together into a book.

 	Title  _____ _____	Character  _____ _____
Setting  _____ _____	Problem  _____ _____	Solution  _____ _____
Beginning  _____ _____	Middle  _____ _____	End  _____ _____