

Spider®

THEME

Use this issue of Spider to help your students think about the different elements that make stories fun, interesting, and mysterious.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

What makes a good story?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a folktale.
- Students will analyze how individuals, events, and ideas develop over the course of a text.
- Students will analyze art.
- Students will read and analyze a short story.
- Students will determine themes of a text and analyze their development.
- Students will research the planets.
- Students will read and analyze a science article.
- Students will summarize key supporting details and ideas.
- Students will plan and carry out investigations.



In addition to supplemental materials focused on core English Language Arts skills, this flexible teaching tool offers vocabulary-building activities, questions for discussion, and cross-curricular activities.

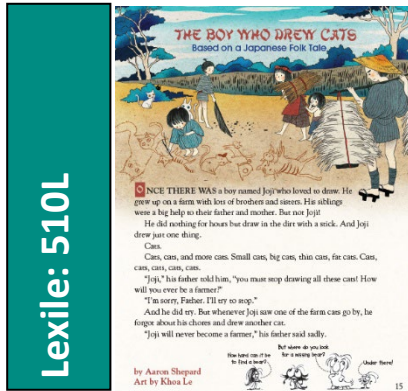
SELECTIONS

- **The Boy Who Drew Cats**
Folktale, 510L
- **Mercury's Missing Mutt**
Science Fiction/Mystery, 500L
- **Goldie and the Gang**
Expository Nonfiction

The Boy Who Drew Cats

pp. 15-19, Folktale

Use this folktale to help students analyze story events in different settings.



RESOURCES

- Analyze Setting and Events

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a folktale.
- Students will analyze how individuals, events, and ideas develop over the course of a text
- Students will analyze art

KEY VOCABULARY

- siblings (p. 15)** brothers or sisters
- priest (p. 16)** a person who performs religious ceremonies
- temple (p. 15)** a building where religious ceremonies are performed
- struggling (p. 18)** fighting
- peered (p. 18)** looked carefully

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What makes a good story?

Ask children to name folktales they've heard or read. Then briefly discuss the kinds of characters and events that occur in folktales. Remind them that many folktales contain talking animals, and unusual events. Ask children to name books, TV shows, and movies that contain these elements. Discuss how they make a story fun and interesting.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display the vocabulary words and read them aloud, along with the definitions. Then have the children work in pairs to create a three-column chart with the headings "characters," "setting," and "events." Have partners decide which story elements the vocabulary words relate to and write them in the columns. Invite volunteers to share their charts. Finally, tell children to look for vocabulary words as they read the story.

READ & DISCUSS

After they read the story, use these questions to prompt discussion:

- How is Joji different from his brothers and sisters?
- What do you think was the conversation between the father and the priest?
- Which sentence in the story tells you that Joji has become afraid of the dark, empty temple?
- How did Joji know that his cat drawing had come to life?

SKILL FOCUS: Analyze Setting and Events

Instruct: Remind children that setting is where and when a story takes place. Have them use text and picture details to determine whether the tale takes place in the past, present, or future. Then, have them use text and picture details to determine where in the world the story takes place. Next, explain that within the larger setting of Japan, there are three smaller settings where important events take place. Invite volunteers to identify these settings (the family farm, the village temple, the dark, empty temple). Invite volunteers to name a few events that happen in each setting.

ASSESS: Distribute the *Analyze Setting and Events* graphic organizer. Have children work in pairs to identify important details in each setting and identify themes or morals for the story.

EXTEND

Art: Bring some books of Japanese art from different periods into the classroom and allow children to explore the images. Have them choose one painting and draw or paint their own version of it.

Name: _____

Analyze Setting and Events

In the chart below, list the story events that happen in each setting.

Story events on the family farm	Story events at the village temple	Story events at the empty temple

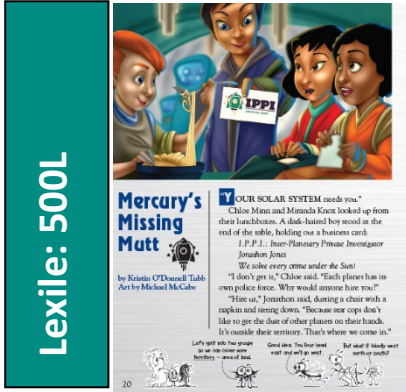
WRITE What is the message or theme of this folktale? On the lines below, write the theme and tell how the folktale shows the theme. Use the back of this page to continue writing, if necessary.

Spider® Teacher Guide: May/June 2025

Mercury's Missing Mutt

pp. 20-24, Science Fiction/Mystery

Use this story about a kidnapped dog on the planet Mercury to teach students about mysteries.



RESOURCES

- Analyze Mysteries

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a short story.
- Students will determine themes of a text and analyze their development.
- Students will research the planets.

KEY VOCABULARY

- territory** (p. 20) area
- mongrel** (p. 21) a dog with parents of different breeds
- teleport** (p. 21) the imagined transfer of matter from one place to another without actually traveling the physical distance
- motive** (p. 24) something that causes a person to act in a certain way

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What makes a good story?

Ask the children if they have ever read a mystery or watch a mystery movie. Invite volunteers to share their experiences. Next, brainstorm a list of the elements of a mystery, such as a crime, suspects, a detective, and clues. Then, explain that the next story is a mystery set on the planet Mercury.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display the vocabulary words and read them aloud, along with the definitions. Then display the sentences below and have the children use the vocabulary words to complete them.

- The _____ dog has a sweet personality.
- Money was the robber's _____.
- The _____ to search was so large it took two days to complete.
- Did the alien _____ from its planet to Earth?

READ & DISCUSS

After the children read the story, use these questions to prompt discussion:

- Why does Mrs. Cash believe that Joy Flipple stole Sirius?
- Describe J. Preston Willingford. What do his actions and words reveal about him?
- Who took Sirius?
- How did the team solve the case?

SKILL FOCUS: Analyze Mysteries

INSTRUCT: Explain that mysteries usually include detectives, criminals, clues, and a surprising twist at the end. Write these words as column headers on the board: *victims, suspects, detectives, clues*. Ask for volunteers for story information about the victims in the story. Write the information provided under the header, victims.

ASSESS: Distribute the *Analyze Mysteries* worksheet. Have children fill in the information under the Victims header. Tell the children to work with a partner to add story information to the chart for the remaining headers.

EXTEND

Science: This story takes place on the planet Mercury. Have children look at books about Mercury and write down some interesting facts about the planet. They can illustrate their writings and share what facts they found the most interesting. Display these writings and illustrations for others to enjoy.

Name _____

Analyze Mysteries: Complete the columns with story information for each header.

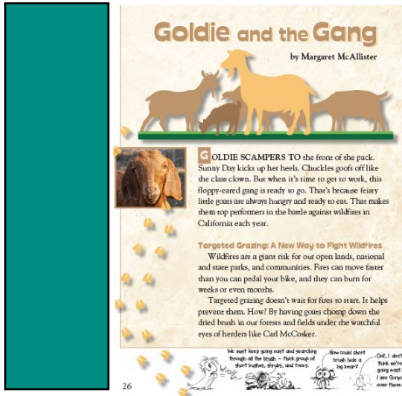
Victims	Suspects

Detectives	Clues

Goldie and the Gang

pp. 26-30, Expository Nonfiction

Use this story about a pack of goats to teach about supporting details in expository nonfiction.



RESOURCES

- Supporting Details Worksheet

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a science article.
- Students will summarize key supporting details and ideas.
- Students will plan and carry out investigations.

KEY VOCABULARY

- scampers** (p. 26) runs, usually playfully
- grazing** (p. 26) feeding on growing plants
- underbrush** (p. 27) shrubs, bushes, or small trees growing beneath large trees in a forest

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: What makes a good story?

Have the children look at the pictures in the article and ask if they've ever noticed goats or other animals grazing. Discuss where they saw them. Display a K-W-L chart and write what the children know about goats, what they would like to know about them.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display the vocabulary words and read them aloud, along with the definitions. Then display the sentences below and have students correct the mistakes.

- The sad and lonely guinea pig scampers in its cage when he is being fed.
- The cows were last seen grazing on the frozen pond.
- The underbrush was empty and flat on the mountain.

READ & DISCUSS

After the children read the story, use these questions to prompt discussion:

- Why are wildfires a giant risk?
- Explain what "Targeted Grazing" is.
- Why are there so many wildfires these days?
- What is the difference between a "carpet" of healthy green plants and a dried-up brown one?

SKILL FOCUS: Supporting Details

INSTRUCT: Have children identify the topic of the article (goats grazing to help against wildfires.) Tell them that the main idea is what a writer wants readers to understand about a topic. Remind the children that the main idea of a nonfiction article is often found in the introduction. Read aloud the first paragraph and ask if any of the sentences state a main idea. ("That makes them top performers in the battle against wildfires in California each year.") Help children turn the main idea into a question. (How are goats top performers in the battle against wildfires?) Tell them that they are going to find supporting details in the body of the article. Explain that these details should answer the question, "How are goats top performers in the battle against wildfires?" Distribute the *Supporting Details* worksheet and go over the supporting details in paragraph one. Explain that details should be written in complete sentences.

ASSESS: Have the children work with a partner to find the key details in the remaining paragraphs. Once they complete the chart, have them work individually to use them to write an article summary.

EXTEND

Science: Have children choose another animal that is used as workers like the goats. Have them research the animal and create an informative poster based on their research.

Name _____

Supporting Details

In the chart below, list the supporting details in the paragraphs. The details you find should answer the question: How are goats top performers in the battle against wildfires?

Paragraph 1 Goats are always hungry and ready to eat.	Paragraph 9
Paragraph 3	Paragraph 10
Paragraph 8	Paragraph 13

Write Use the details in the chart to write a summary of “Goldie and the Gang.”
