



## Overview

Something odd has been happening and the family decides something needs to be done. Numerous clues are presented in the text and illustrations to stimulate readers to play detective and work out what the family's problem is and how it might be solved.

"Something Strange Going On" requires students to "confidently use a range of processing and comprehension strategies to make meaning from and think critically about"

text (from *The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 14).

This text provides opportunities for the students to notice and make connections between clues in the text and the illustrations and their own experience to make inferences and form and test hypotheses. They can also explore (analyse) how the writer has crafted this narrative into a mystery story.

There is an audio version of the text as an MP3 file at [www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz](http://www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz)

## Text characteristics

Key text characteristics relating to the reading standard for after three years at school are shown in the boxes with a solid outline.

Shifts in time, with indicators to show events happening in the past

A mix of explicit and implicit content within text and illustrations that requires students to make connections between ideas in the text and their own experiences to make simple inferences and form and test hypotheses about what the mystery is and how it might be solved

A variety of sentence structures

That evening at dinner, the family talked about the problem. "There's something strange going on in this house," said Dad. "And I bet you all know what I'm talking about." "I've been thinking," said Mum. "Perhaps the dog is hiding them in his kennel?" "I thought of that, too, but there's nothing there," said Dad. "Maybe the cat next door is taking them," suggested Hollie. "Remember she did that once before?" "Maybe. I'll have a talk with the neighbour," said Mum. "I think there might be a monster with only one leg. He comes out at night and takes one at a time!" said Noah. Everyone laughed.

"Well, I'm sick of looking odd at work," said Dad. "Today it was grey and blue. People are starting to stare at me." "Remember when I was getting ready for Kate's party?" said Hollie. "I really wanted to wear my favourite purple ones." "I sure do," sighed Mum. "I told you to look under your bed." "I still couldn't find the missing one. All I found was an apple core and an overdue library book."

Deliberate language choices that convey a sense of mystery and uncertainty and encourage students to be "detectives"

Visual language features (thought bubbles) that signal to the reader some of the events that had already happened before the story started

Frequent use of dialogue, some of which is not explicitly attributed, and more than one character speaking on a page

**English (Reading)**

Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences

**Suggested reading purpose**

(What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?)

- To find out what is happening to the family and how the mystery is solved.

**Suggested learning goals for this text**

(What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically” about texts?)

**Select and adapt** from the suggestions below according to your students’ strengths, needs, and experiences – their culture, language, and identity. (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8, Knowledge of the Learner, page 6*).

- The students identify clues in the text and illustrations and make connections to their own experiences to infer what the “something strange” is.
- They use their inferences to form and test hypotheses about the mystery and about the solution to the family’s problem.
- They use multiple sources of information to make sense of what they are reading.
- They identify how the author has made this into a mystery story.

**Text and language features****Vocabulary**

- Possible unfamiliar words, such as “investigate”, “mystery”, “suggested”, “sighed”, “tournament”, “laundry”, “exhausted”, “slither”, “peered”, “Brilliant”, “solved”
- The adverbs: “excitedly”, “carefully”
- Figures of speech, such as “a plan of attack”, “bright and early”, “The house was turned upside down”.

**Possible supporting strategies**

Monitor the students’ **decoding** attempts by noticing their use of words from the text during discussion. Prompt them to remember strategies they can use, for example:

- using their knowledge that letters and digraphs can have more than one sound (“y” in “mystery”, “g” in “investigate” and “suggested”, “au” in “exhausted” and “laughed”)
- breaking words into familiar chunks (“in-vest-i-gate”, “tour-na-ment”, “Brill-i-ant”, “care-ful-ly”).

Monitor the students’ use of **word-solving** strategies to work out the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases. Prompt them to remember the strategies they can use, often in combination, for example:

- using the context and their prior knowledge to work out the meaning of descriptive vocabulary, for example, “slither”, “peered”, “excitedly”.

Explain that these types of adverbs describe how something is done.

Explain that figures of speech can have a meaning that is different from the actual words. For example, “a plan of attack” is a more interesting way of saying “a plan”, and “attack” means to start doing something (and not to fight someone).

Have a dictionary available to confirm or clarify word meanings. Have bilingual dictionaries, where appropriate, available for students who have a first language other than English.

**Text features**

- The thought bubbles
- The frequent use of dialogue, much of which is not attributed, with several characters speaking on a page
- The complex sentences
- The adverbial and prepositional phrases of place
- Language signalling duration
- Language structure.

If necessary, discuss the difference between illustrations (showing what is really happening) and thought bubbles (showing what characters are imagining or remembering). Explain that they show the reader some of the events that happened before the story started.

Prompt the students to notice the speech marks, the attributions, and the paragraph indents to indicate when there is a new speaker.


Explain that the compound sentences in this story often include information about *when* or *where* events are happening.

Support students to build an understanding of these phrases: “in his kennel”, “under your bed”, “into the basket”, “between the laundry tub and the side of the washing machine”.


Support students to build an understanding of the following descriptors of time: “for weeks”, “After a while”, “one morning”, “That evening”, “at night”, “straight after breakfast”, “and then”, “by morning tea”, “As she was lifting the damp washing into the basket”.

Support the students to notice how the author helped the reader to use clues in the text to solve the mystery.

**Metacognition**

Effective readers are metacognitive. They are aware of the processes and strategies they draw on and are able to explain how they use these to successfully make meaning and think critically. Examples of metacognitive behaviours, or strategies teachers can use to promote metacognitive behaviours, are threaded through the notes and indicated by .

**HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS TO BE METACOGNITIVE**

 Ask questions: *How did you know that bit was wrong? Or: I noticed that you reread that bit when you got confused. How did rereading help you?*

 Use prompts: *Think about what you can do to find help with the meaning of that word. Look at the rest of the sentence. How did it help you?*

## Introducing the text

- Support the students in their roles as reading “detectives” by incorporating the “investigative” language of the text into the introductory discussion. *There’s something strange going on in this story. This family has a mystery to solve and you will need to be detectives to work out what it is.* Highlight the words “mystery”, “solve”, “detectives”. Ask questions to clarify and agree on definitions for them. Add “clues”. Record the words and the definitions.
- Have the students read the title and page 25. Identify and discuss the main clues so far (the problem has been going on for a long time, it wasn’t too bad at first, it affects everyone in the family). Look for further clues in the illustration. For students who need support with identifying

the sequence of events, highlight and record the phrases that signal time (and, if appropriate, the verb forms). Tell them to look for these types of signals and to use them to understand the sequence of events.

- Encourage the students to think about what the mystery could be but to hold their ideas in their heads so that everyone has a chance to work it out for themselves. Tell the students that you will be asking them to share their ideas later.
- *While you’re reading, you will need to look for clues and put them together to help you form a hypothesis about what the mystery is.*
- Share the reading purpose and learning goal(s).

## Reading and discussing the text

Instructional strategies you can use to support the students to achieve the learning goals are in the right-hand column. **Select from and adapt** the suggestions below according to your students’ needs.

### What to look for, prompt, and support as the students work towards achieving their learning goal

#### Pages 26–27

The students identify clues in the texts and illustrations (including the thought bubbles).

The students make connections between the clues they have found and their own experiences to make simple inferences, for example, that things are going missing (the use of “them” rather than “it”, “favourite purple ones”, “the missing one”), and that it has something to do with legs or feet (“a monster with only one leg”) and with matching (“looking odd”, “grey and blue”, the glimpse of Dad’s odd socks in the page 27 illustration).

The students use their accumulated inferences to form a hypothesis about what the “something strange” is.

### How you can support students to read, respond, and think critically

Remind the students they will need to look for clues as they read these pages so that they can work out what the family’s problem is.

If necessary, model your thinking: *I’m noticing that Mum said “Perhaps the dog is hiding them”. So I know it’s something a dog might pick up. Now I need to look for more clues to help me work out what the missing things are.*

Respond to the students’ spontaneous comments as they discover and discuss clues.

At the end of page 27, ask the students to say what they think will happen. Ask them to record this (I think it’s ... because ...) and share what they have written with a partner. For students who need more support, guide them through identifying each clue, making inferences, and using these to decide what might happen next. You could use a graphic organiser like the one below to support pairs of students to do this. Differentiate the level of support by selecting which cells to fill in and which to leave for students to fill in. As students read the text, support them in checking if their hypotheses were correct.

Clue from text	Inference	Hypothesis	Check	Yes/No

#### Pages 28–29

The students identify further clues and use them to test their hypotheses about what the “something strange” is.

They make connections to their own experiences of looking for things to decide if the family’s plan is likely to work and to clarify the meaning of “The house was turned upside down”.

They identify the clues in the fourth paragraph of page 29 (Dad’s blue sock slithering into the gap beside the washing machine) as important in helping to confirm (or change) what they thought was going to happen.

The students use their knowledge of narrative structure to identify Mum’s discovery as a turning point in the story and to work out how the mystery will be solved.

*I see that Noah is talking about his “new ones”. Does that fit with your ideas? Do you need to change what you were thinking?*

*Does this sound like a good plan of attack? Is this what you would do? What sort of clues will they be looking for?*

*Did they really turn the house upside down? Why has the author chosen to use those words?*

*Is there anything that confirms what you think is missing and where it (or they) might be? Does it fit with your thoughts?*

Model your thinking: *When Mum saw the blue sock disappear, it made me think that my hypothesis about the family’s problem was right. Now I think we’re going to find out how they will solve it.*

Ask the students to share their ideas about how the story will end.

## Pages 30–31

The students make connections between the illustrations on pages 30 and 31.

The students consider whether Hollie's plan will work and whether this is where the rest of the missing socks will be.

The students make connections to their own experiences to help them think critically about why it took time for the missing socks to become such a problem.

☑ With support, the students reflect on their learning. They revisit the reading purpose and learning goal(s) and explain what they did to meet them, for example, finding clues and thinking about their own experiences to work out what the “something strange” was.

☑ The students identify some challenges in the text and explain how they worked (or tried to work) them out.

Clarify that the page 30 illustration is a close-up of the gap between the laundry tub and the washing machine.

After reading page 30, ask the students to share their hypotheses about what will happen.

Prompt the students to think critically: *Why were the missing socks such a problem? Would this be the same in your house? What could the family do to stop this happening in the future?*

Revisit the reading purpose and learning goal(s).

☑ Prompt the students to make connections to their own experiences: *How did thinking about your own experiences of missing socks help you decide if your hypothesis was correct?*

Ask the students to talk with a partner about when they confirmed their hypothesis about what the “something strange” was and what clues helped them.

☑ Ask questions: *What strategies did you use to help you work out what a word or phrase meant? How effective were these strategies? If necessary, model or explain some strategies the students could use.*

## After reading

- Students can reread the story as they listen to the audio version. Audio versions also provide English language learners with good models of pronunciation, intonation, and expression.
- Provide opportunities for the students to practise making connections between clues in the text and illustrations to make inferences.
  - Ask the students to recall some of the clues they found as they read. Write each clue on a card. Give each student a card and ask them to reread the text, looking for further clues. To make the task easier, you could direct the students to a particular page. If necessary, model the task yourself: *The clues I have found are ... Therefore, from what I know and these clues, I think ...*
  - When the students have found their supporting evidence, have them explain it to a partner. For example, if needed:

The clues	Our inferences
It has been going on for weeks It's starting to bother them	The family has a problem, and it's getting worse.
The dog might be hiding them The cat might have taken them	Something is missing.
“them” “takes one at a time” “favourite purple ones”	More than one thing is missing.
Dogs and cats can carry them They fit under a bed and in drawers	The missing things are small.
“a monster with only one leg”	The missing things are something to do with legs or feet.
Dad looks odd at work because “it was grey and blue” His socks are different in the illustration	The missing things match in some way.

- See the Related texts section below for examples of other texts you could use in a guided reading session.
- Provide opportunities for the students to practise their skills of identifying how the author has used language to make this text into a mystery or a detective story.
  - Ask the students to summarise the story in one or two sentences, for example, “The family's socks were going missing, and they found out that they were slipping down a gap by the washing machine.” Draw out the idea that the author has deliberately crafted this very simple event to make it into a mystery story that is fun to try solve.
  - Discuss how the students needed to be like detectives and look for clues. Together, identify how on page 25, the author has used the phrases “Something strange” and “investigate this mystery” and the word “it” (three times) to make it clear that this is a mystery story.
  - Ask the students to reread page 26 and identify examples of ways the author has shown that the characters don't know where the missing socks are (for example, “Perhaps”, “Maybe”, “I think”, “suggested”).
- If the students have had trouble keeping track of the dialogue, use the text for Readers' Theatre. Have the students prepare for this by highlighting the dialogue for their role on a photocopy of the text.
- Discuss the students' experiences of finding lost items in odd places. They could write a set of clues and ask other students to identify the missing item. For example, “I take it to school every day. It has my name on it. I would be very hungry without it.” (Answer: lunch).
- For students who need support to follow the shifts in time and/or the language used to signal time, create a timeline and place the events on the timeline. You could photocopy illustrations from the story and have the students arrange them in the correct order below the timeline. Have cards with “time” words or phrases on them and ask the students to match the sequence of pictures with the appropriate word or phrase. Invite the students to orally retell the story and use the cards to sequence their retelling.

## Related texts

Texts about “mystery” that require students to find clues and make inferences: “The Stowaway” (JJ 45); “Missing” (JJ 42), “Taniwha Trouble” (JJ 40); “The Desk” (JJ 38)