

The Missing Story Star

K-2 with adult support | 20 minutes | Prep: 3 minutes

What children practice

Children use two clues to choose a plausible location and explain how new information changed or strengthened their idea.

Gather and set up

One scrap of paper marked STAR, one picture book, one empty folder and one pencil box. All three possible hiding places should be able to open. Optional clue cards and pencils. Before the session, put the paper STAR between two pages of the book. Place the book, empty folder and pencil box where everyone can see them. Tell children this is a pretend puzzle you set up. Keep the three clue cards in order and the solution separate.

0-3 min • Open the case

Explain: 'Our paper story star is in one of these three places. It left us clues.' Name and show the book, empty folder and pencil box. Let everyone make a private first guess.

3-7 min • Clue one

Read: 'I am inside something you can open.' All three places still fit. Ask 'Do we know enough yet?' Keep more than one possibility alive.

7-12 min • Clue two

Read: 'There are pages on both sides of me.' Partners reconsider. Ask which location now fits better and which words helped them.

12-16 min • Clue three and reveal

Read: 'I am keeping your place for the next story.' Invite a final explanation, then open the book to reveal the paper. Give the star's message: 'I am a bookmark. Important work. Excellent naps.'

16-20 min • Explain the change

Children record a first idea and a later idea, or tell them to a partner. Ask which clue changed or confirmed their thinking. Finish by inventing a new job for the star.

Free 30-minute introductory workshop

Live on Zoom: the whole book + voices + a turn directing C. J.

Adults: cjmcguirebooks.com/visit

Subject to availability. School/library groups; a teacher or librarian hosts.

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Keep the thinking going

‘Detectives don’t have to guess fastest. Their job is to explain what the clues tell them.’

What a response might sound like

The book is the intended solution. Clue one alone does not distinguish the three places. Clue two points to the book because the folder is empty and the pencil box contains no pages. Clue three supports its new job as a bookmark. If your setup differs, accept alternatives that fit and fix the setup for next time.

Make the first step smaller

Keep all objects visible and describe their important features aloud. Read each clue twice. Children can point to a location, direct a partner, sign, draw or use familiar communication supports. No searching around the room is required.

Add a challenge when ready

Invite children to design a fair new clue for a different hiding place. Test whether it eliminates every wrong option; revise clues that accidentally fit more than one place.

A quick check for understanding

Ask ‘Why the book?’ A response that refers to pages or keeping a reading place shows a clue-to-explanation connection. Finding the star without a reason is a prompt for another conversation, not a failure.

No printer? No problem.

Write STAR on scrap paper and read clues from this page. Without props, draw and label the three places on a board and tell the same puzzle aloud.

Print only what you need

Pages 1-2: adult reference. Page 3: one set of cards per group, or read aloud without cutting. Page 4: optional child response. US Letter: actual size. A4: Fit. Student pages use black lines and white backgrounds.

Developed for C. J. McGuire Books with AI assistance. Suggested activities for educator review, not an independently evaluated curriculum. Feedback: hello@cjm McGuire Books.com.

Read one clue at a time



A grown-up can read these. Point, tell, sign or use your usual communication supports.

CLUE 1

I am inside something you can open.

CLUE 2

There are pages on both sides of me.

CLUE 3

I am keeping your place for the next story.

My idea took a turn



Draw, tell, dictate or write. An adult can put your words on the page.

Draw your first idea and your later idea.

At first I thought... Now I think...

The clue that helped was...