

Read it. Wonder. Try another idea.

A read-aloud companion for C. J. McGuire's picture book, now in illustrated reader review. Publication details are still to come. The case-file activity on page 2 also works without the book.

Before you read

Read the book's grown-up note silently to yourself first, not aloud to the children.

Check that the monster pictures and sounds suit your listeners. Start quietly, leave time to inspect the pictures, and pause between "Suspicious" and "Very suspicious." Joining in is optional; quiet listening counts.

After the story: a few good noises

AWOOOOOO!

A pretend howl. Try it curious, then sleepy.

OOOOOOOW!

A pretend "ow." No real bump needed.

Grrrr...

Your softest, silliest growl.

Agree on a comfortable volume first. No shouting or sudden scares. A face, a gesture or just listening is welcome. Which voice made your reading partner laugh?

Ask the little detectives

- What did Penelope notice? What did she think it meant?
- What can you see in the picture that the words do not tell you?
- Did your idea change? What helped you think differently?
- Could the same clue have another explanation?

Try a case of your own

Choose a safe everyday object or a picture with a grown-up. Use page 2 to draw the clue, make a first guess, then try another explanation. Children can draw, point or dictate. Investigate objects, not people's appearance; keep pretend traps on the page.

Printing: US Letter at actual size, or "Fit" on A4. Print only page 2 for the activity. Plain paper works, too.

Free copying for noncommercial home, classroom and library use, including closed class platforms. Keep the credit and website link. For public sharing, link to the resource page. This permission covers the companion, not the full book or recorded readings.

Activity wording is adapted from book page 37. The book uses AI-generated illustrations under C. J. McGuire's creative direction; manuscript adaptation and editorial development also used AI tools. Companion revised September 2026.

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.
(C) 2026 C. J. McGuire. Free classroom, library and home copying.



Your turn, detective.



Draw something ordinary that looks mysterious.
What do you think it could be?

Draw, point or tell. A grown-up can write your words.

THE CLUE

My first guess:

Another explanation:

A good detective can change their mind.