

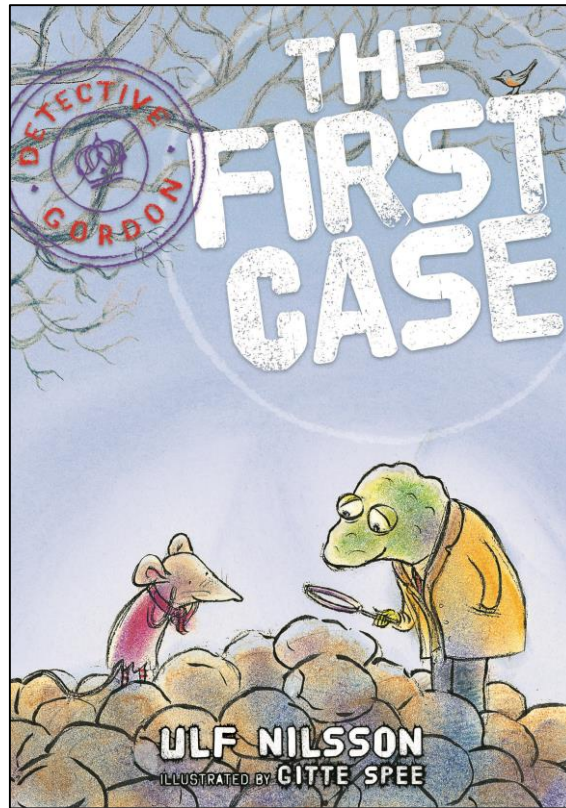


GECKO PRESS

Teaching notes

DETECTIVE GORDON: THE FIRST CASE

Written by Ulf Nilsson & illustrated by Gitte Spee



Synopsis

Someone's stealing nuts from the forest, and it's up to Detective Gordon to catch the thief!

Unfortunately, solving this crime means standing in the snow and waiting for a long time... If only he had an assistant – someone small, fast, and clever – to help solve this terrible case. Then Detective Gordon would be able to go back to doing what he's best at: thinking, eating cakes, drinking tea, and stamping important papers.

The author

Ulf Nilsson is a celebrated children's writer in Sweden and a winner of the August and American Batchelder awards. He wrote the Gecko Press books *When We Were Alone in the World* and *The Best Singer in the World*.

The illustrator

Gitte Spee graduated from the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, a renowned academy of fine art and design in the Netherlands. She now works in Amsterdam as a children's book illustrator.



Themes

This funny, illustrated mystery story has several themes: animals; solving crimes; friendship; humour; mercy and justice.

Activities

1. Before reading the book, look at the cover image and title. Discuss what you think this story might be about?
2. Get into groups and brainstorm a list of the characteristics displayed by Buffy and another list of those depicting Detective Gordon. Think about which characteristics Buffy and Detective Gordon have in common as well as ones they don't share, including things they like or dislike, things they're good at achieving, and other attributes. Create a Venn diagram which shows the attributes they share and don't share. Discuss how Detective Gordon and Buffy make a great team because they're different.
3. Detective Gordon often eats cakes. Invent a cake that a toad detective might enjoy. Write the recipe, trying to use ingredients you could find in a forest, and draw a picture of the cake.
4. Divide into small groups to solve this new mystery: *"When Squirrel woke up in the morning, his scarf was gone. He'd washed it and hung it to dry on a branch of his tree and forgotten to take it down before going to bed. There were no tracks in the soft earth below the tree, and he hadn't heard a single noise all night. All day long, all of the forest animals had admired his scarf, especially raccoon, rabbit, fox, and bear."*

Suspects: toad, bear, fox, rabbit, owl, snake, eagle, raccoon, wolf

Using this scenario, discuss and identify characteristics of the thief based on the information about the crime. For example, "nocturnal," as the crime happened at night; "does not make tracks;" "can reach high branches;" "can carry a long scarf;" and "is quiet." Then recreate the chart Detective Gordon used to narrow down suspects (p. 55). Create a grid of suspects on one side and characteristics along the top. Put "x"s next to the characteristics that apply to each animal. The animal with "x"s in all columns is most likely the thief. Write down your conclusion.

(Answer: owl. She had not seen the scarf during the day. She spotted it on the branch while hunting at night and took it home to line her nest.)



5. Study the map in the back of the book, and identify landmarks from the story. Then brainstorm the buildings, parks, businesses, trees, homes or other landmarks are located in your neighborhood. Draw their own maps, labelling these landmarks.
When the maps are finished, make up a mystery story of your own that can be followed on the map.
6. Pretend you are Buffy, the squirrel or one of the thieves, and write a personal diary entry about it from your point of view. Think about how you would describe the physical scene, any other characters who were involved and your feelings about the incident.
7. Choose your favourite scene from the book and create your own artistic interpretation of it. Use, for example, a diorama, painting, model, poem, cartoon strip, etc.
8. Detective Gordon is a detective. Think of some other jobs and occupations that forest animals might have and write a story about them.
9. Review the book for your favourite magazine or website. What did you like about the book? Why? What did you dislike about the book? Why? Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten.

Activities by Jessica Young <https://psreading.wordpress.com/book-based-activities/detective-gordon-the-first-case-by-ulf-nillson-illustrated-by-gittee-spee-gecko-press-2015/> and Gecko Press