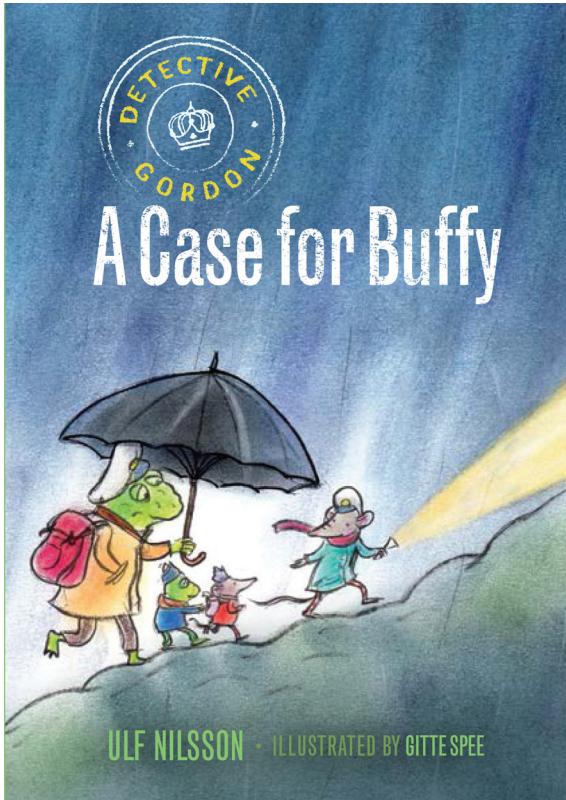


GECKO PRESS

Teaching Notes



Detective Gordon

A Case for Buffy

By Ulf Nilsson, Illustrated by Gitte Spee

The final story in this big-hearted series takes on the most important case ever investigated in Detective Gordon's forest—where is Buffy's mother? Gordon faces his old nemesis, the fox, in an investigation that leads beyond the edges of the forest all the way to the mysterious Cave Island.

The Author

Ulf Nilsson is a celebrated Swedish children's writer, who has written many books, for all ages. He is a winner of the August and American Batchelder awards.

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

Themes in this fun detective story include community, teamwork, and family. Detective Gordon and Buffy are accompanied by two student police to find out what happened to Buffy's family on Cave Island. Along the way, they learn about how good policing can ensure a safe and happy community for all citizens.

Activities

Level One – Text (Before and While Reading)

1. Before you read the book, look at the cover (front and back) of the book. What can you tell about the story from the title, font, illustrations, and blurb? Think about the colours and style of illustrations and what they might tell you about what sort of story this is.
2. Either on your own or in pairs find the definition of the following words that appear in the story and then use them in a new sentence: Coiling (p. 5), salute (p. 15), catastrophe (p. 35), pungent (p. 59), prohibited (p. 61).
3. Onomatopoeia are sound effect words. They mimic the sound the word describes. For example, “Kla-dunk” (p. 5) is the sound of Detective Gordon and Buffy’s stamp. As you read the book, look for other examples of onomatopoeia. Try and find at least five.

Level Two – Responding to the Text and Reading Between the Lines (While Reading)

1. At the start of the book, we learn that “Any animal with a problem could go there [the police station] for help” (p. 5). What do you know about the police station in your community? Where is the nearest police station? For what problems might you go to the station? What can you get help for there? Discuss as a class.
2. “How happy and pleased Buffy was! Inside she felt absolutely pink and pale blue” (p. 8). Pink and pale blue are happy colours for Buffy. What colours make you feel happy? In the next chapter, we read “She felt very dark inside” (p. 16). How has Buffy’s mood changed? Why is this? What colours do you think are sad colours? Discuss as a class.
3. Detective Gordon encourages Gertrude and Sune to use positive reinforcement to help animals correct their behaviour in the forest. Positive reinforcement encourages good behaviour and habits instead of making people feel bad by telling them off. For example, instead of telling someone off for dropping rubbish, he encourages them to pass the animal the rubbish and say, “Excuse me, but you might have dropped this” (p. 27). In small groups of 3-4, come up with different ways to use positive reinforcement in your classroom. Present your two favourite examples to the class.
4. On the journey to Cave Island, the mice “felt very seasick” (p. 44). Do you know why some people feel seasick? What are some remedies to help people feel less seasick? Discuss as a class.
5. Gordon tells Fox that it is prohibited to assault mice because “it is the law” (p 61). Why do we have laws? Who decides them? What would happen if there were no laws? Do you know of laws they have in other countries that you don’t have in your own?

Level Three – Creating Based on the Text

1. This story is set in Autumn. What does Autumn look, sound, and smell like in a forest? Draw your own Autumn forest picture on A4 paper. Include different colours and details (animals, plants). This could be a forest in your own country or another country if you would like to include flora and fauna that you wouldn't find where you live. You could even draw a picture that is a combination of Autumn details from different countries!
2. The stamp is a very important tool at the police station. There are lots of ways you can make your own stamp using cotton spools, Styrofoam, and even potatoes. Make your own stamp of a small symbol or image from the book. Two ideas are a cake or an Autumn leaf.
3. Read the interrogation of the fox on pages 61-67. Make note of some of the tactics Detective Gordon and Buffy use to interrogate the fox. Do they do or say things similar to detectives in other police books or films you know of? In groups of 3 create your own skit (short play) of an interrogation. Two of you will play the detectives and one will play the suspect (another animal in the forest). Decide what the crime is that you are interrogating the suspect for. Have fun but don't be mean! Perform the skit for your class.

Level Four – Beyond the Text

1. Detective Gordon gives Gertrude and Sune paper, scissors, and glue so that they can make their own police hats (p. 20). Police officers often wear hats as part of their uniform. However, police uniforms can vary quite a lot in different countries. In pairs, use the Internet or library to research police uniforms in five different countries (not including your own). What are some of the similarities and differences? Do most uniforms have the same colour? Do some uniforms make the police appear friendlier and more approachable than others? What is the most unusual uniform?
2. "If you simply drive your danger away, it becomes someone else's danger" (p. 55) is an example of an aphorism. An aphorism is an observation or statement that contains a general truth. In groups of 3-4, discuss the best aphorisms you have learned from a parent, other caregiver, or friend. Choose your favourite new aphorism (it could be one from the book). Next, write it on a card or small poster that you can display in your classroom, bedroom, or somewhere else you will see it regularly. Make sure the card is eye-catching and use colours that make you feel positive.
3. When the police set off to investigate, "The two talented sniffers went first" (p.59). As a class or in small groups, go outside and find somewhere you can sit quietly for five minutes. Close your eyes and see how many different smells you can detect. You might not be able to name all the smells, but you might be able to use another word or phrase to describe it. Aim to detect 4-5 different smells. The more unusual and unexpected the better!



GEOCKO PRESS
curiously good books

For more teaching activities, visit www.geckopress.com or contact us
info@geckopress.com

Teaching notes prepared by Emily Duncan