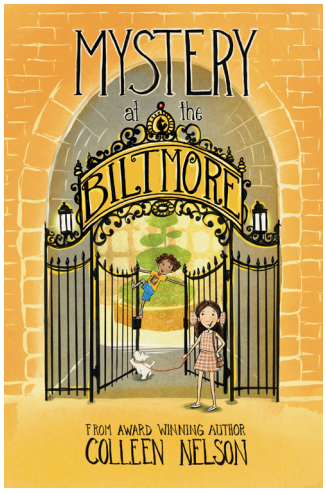
Mystery at the Biltmore

TEACHING GUIDE



Story Summary

The Biltmore in New York City is full of mysteries, and Elodie LaRue, a novice detective, plans to piece together the clues and solve the case of the missing jewels.

Left behind by her globe-trotting detective parents once again, Elodie decides to prove she's worthy of joining them on a case by setting up her own detective agency at her renowned Upper West Side home, The Biltmore.

When a pair of sapphire earrings mysteriously disappear from Mrs. Vanderhoff's apartment, Elodie is asked to solve the case. Elodie begins her investigation the way any good detective would, looking for clues and potential suspects. With twists, turns, and suspects galore, will Elodie be able to prove she has what it takes to solve a crime? Or will the LaRue Detective Agency fail on its first case? As Elodie, her dog Carnegie, and new friend Oscar (a self-proclaimed parkour master) delve deeper into the mystery, they encounter a quirky cast of characters, an array of clues, and a little bit of fun.

Colored illustrations by award-winning artist, Peggy Collins, are scattered throughout the story, bringing additional humor to the cast of quirky characters.

From the award-winning author of *The Umbrella House*, Colleen Nelson brings another New York apartment building to life in *Mystery at the Biltmore*. Written with charm and wit, *Mystery at The Biltmore* is *Only Murders in the Building* meets *Harriet the Spy*.

Juvenile Fiction Ages 8–12 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-327-8 | Pages: 136

Reading Level

Fountas & Pinnell: T
Lexile: 720L

BISAC Codes

JUV028000 JUVENILE FICTION / Mysteries & Detective Stories
JUV014000 JUVENILE FICTION / Girls & Women
JUV039060 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Friendship
JUV021000 JUVENILE FICTION / Law & Crime
JUV023000 JUVENILE FICTION / Lifestyles / City & Town Life
JUV030060 JUVENILE FICTION / Places / United States

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There are two attachments for this teacher's guide. The first, "Investigation Diary," is a double-sided black-line master for students to use to make their own investigation diary. The second, "Your Road Map to Writing a Mystery," is a fun infographic teachers can use to explain how to write a mystery.

Pre-reading

1. What other mystery books have you read? What elements do all mystery stories share?
2. What are the qualities a good detective needs to have? As you read *Mystery at the Biltmore*, make a list of the qualities that make Elodie a good detective—do her qualities align with your pre-reading list?

During Reading: making your own Investigation Diary

1. Just like Elodie, you can use an investigation diary to keep track of clues and evidence that will lead you to the culprit. Can you figure out who stole Mrs. Vanderhoff's earrings and their motive before Elodie and Oscar do?
2. A black-line master has been included for educators to use. **Cut along all dashed-lines and staple at the top to make a flip book.** (You may also choose to make a larger version by folding four papers in half and stapling them together. Label the cover 'Investigation Diary' and the interior pages 'Suspect #1,' and so on.)

Students can also track the suspects using the chart below:

Suspect Name	Occupation	Relationship to Mrs. Vanderhoff	Motive	Clues	Theory	Is this suspect the culprit? Why or why not?

After Reading: writing your own mystery

1. Before you begin writing your own mystery, review the following terms:

- **Detective or sleuth:** the person who uses clues to solve the mystery.
- **Red herring or false lead:** a suspect who throws the detective off the trail of the real culprit.
- **Suspect:** the person (or people) who might have committed the crime.
- **Investigation:** the process of using clues to solve a mystery.
- **Clue:** a hint that detectives use to piece together the mystery.
- **Suspense:** the waiting and wondering of the story.
- **Culprit:** the person behind the crime.
- **Evidence:** physical proof that points in the direction of the culprit.
- **Motive:** the reason behind a character's action.
- **Hunch:** a guess based on feeling.
- **Suspicion:** a guess based on reason.

Can you find examples of these words in *Mystery at the Biltmore*? Give the page number and a short explanation. (Example: Elodie is the detective.)

2. Writing a mystery means taking your reader on a winding path with lots of twists and turns and it always starts with a crime. Let's say something is missing, like Mrs. Vanderhoff's earrings. Your detective finds clues which he or she uses as evidence to find the culprit. Along the way, there might be a red herring, or a false lead to keep the story interesting. The detective might face a bumpy path wondering if they'll ever solve the case until a final clue is revealed and everything clicks into place.

- Who is your detective?
- What is the setting? (Where the story takes place.)
- What is missing?
- Who are three suspects? What are their motives?
- Who is the actual culprit and what clue have they left behind? An article of clothing? A sticky thumbprint? Or have they said something that accidentally put them at the scene of the crime?

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TEACHING GUIDE

Begin your story by introducing the detective and where he or she lives. Keep your reader guessing by leaving clues and red herrings along the way. Once you've answered the questions, use "Your Road Map to Writing a Mystery" to outline your story and keep it handy while writing.

Tip: If you're looking for more mysteries, try 5 Minute Mystery: Short, online you-solve-it mysteries.

This Teacher's Guide was written by award-winning author and middle-school teacher, ***Colleen Nelson****. Colleen Nelson is the author of* Mystery at the Biltmore*!*

This guide was created with support from Ontario Creates

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Suspect #4

Suspect #2

Investigation
Diary

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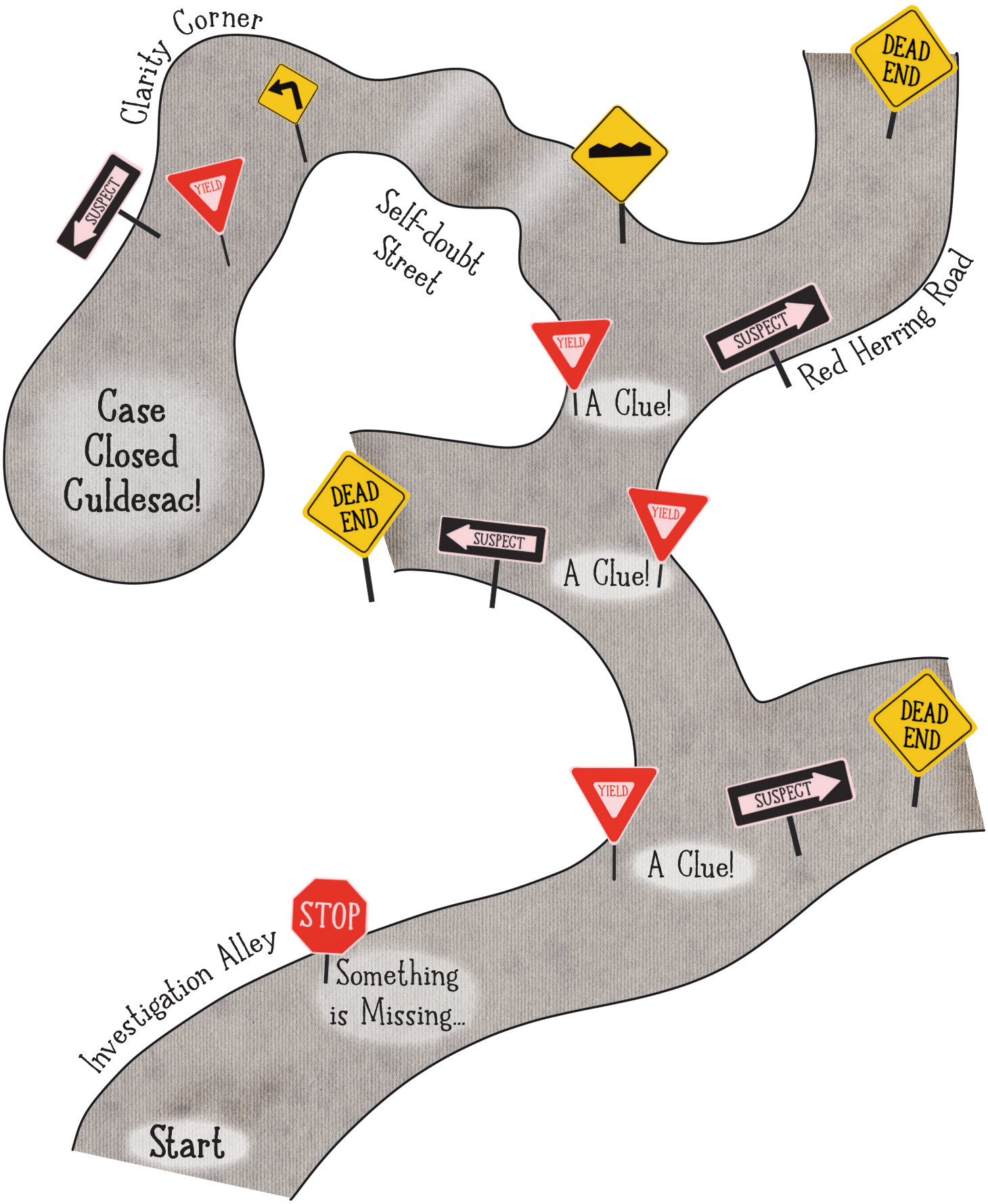
Suspect #6

Suspect #7

Suspect #1

Suspect #3

Suspect #5

Your Road Map to Writing a Mystery