

WAYCRAFT

INITIATIVE

MONSTER IN THE WOODS?

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WAYCRAFT
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MONSTER IN THE WOODS?

OBSERVE · QUESTION · INVESTIGATE · DECIDE

FOR THE PARENT
What Your Child Will Learn
AGES 10+

Monster in the Woods teaches disciplined inquiry by beginning with experience. Across three days, your child notices the natural impulse to interpret evidence, notices the same impulse in other people, and learns to organize what is known, what seems to be the case, and what might be. The investigation is designed so that the evidence does not establish a complete account of what happened.

At the end of the course, your child will provide advice for what should be done based on the established facts.

Your role is to direct attention without supplying conclusions. Ask the printed questions, wait for adequate responses, and let uncertainty remain when the evidence does not warrant closure. Do not name a distinction before your child has noticed the need for it.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Your child succeeds when they recognize that they do not know what actually happened. Being uncertain, admitting it, and refusing to act as though a possibility were definite when acting could harm a person or animal is mature judgment.

Your child may feel disappointed, frustrated, or saddened that the mystery does not resolve. Reassure them and build them up. The point is not to reward guessing. It is to learn when the evidence supports a conclusion and when it does not. You may share a brief story from your own life about acting without enough information and causing problems, or about being glad you waited because you were not sure.

Any game can teach children to put pieces together. Deeper education asks them to put the pieces together carefully and still accept uncertainty when certainty has not been earned.

YOUR ROLE

1. Use the script as a guide through each lesson.
2. Let your child work through answering your questions and support them without giving them the answers.
3. Do not explain what clues mean.
4. On day 3, let the encounter with the Mayor continue until the child recognizes what can and cannot be established and what should be done considering that.

DAY 1 OF 3
THE IMPULSE TO EXPLAIN

DAY 1
Notice the inferential impulse: your child naturally puts facts together in order to explain what happened.

PARENT ONLY — PURPOSE
Your goal today is for your child to notice that, as each fact arrives, they naturally desire to understand and, to do so, they try to put the facts together to explain what happened. Do not teach inference before this noticing occurs.

SCRIPT
Begin here with your child. **DO NOT DISTRIBUTE** the student the worksheet until the script says.

1 **READ**
The town of Bellweather sits beside a thick forest. During the night, one or more of Mr. Miller's goats have disappeared. In the morning, Mr. Miller reported that the goats' enclosure was damaged. Mayor Bell has asked you to investigate.

2 **ASK**
"Here is the evidence we have been given. What do you find yourself wanting to do with it?"

WAIT FOR SOMETHING LIKE: "We want to find out what happened." Do not continue until your child gives an adequate answer.

3 **DISTRIBUTE THE SIX CLUES**
Read the clues in order. After each clue, wait for your child to take it in. Do not interpret the clue for them.

4

CLUE 1
A goat is missing from a damaged enclosure. The gate is still latched. No blood or remains are visible.

CLUE 2
In the goat enclosure, several of the rear boards are broken. The boards are bent outwards. Other damage is harder to read, and the direction of force is not uniform.

CLUE 3
Large, incomplete animal tracks appear near the enclosure. They are too damaged to identify confidently. Smaller animal tracks cross the same ground.

CLUE 4
Coarse dark hair is caught on one broken board. Nearby, a short strip of torn woven fabric hangs from a splinter.

CLUE 5
Deep scratches appear unusually high on a nearby tree. Lower scratches and claw marks also occur around the base.

CLUE 6
A partial boot print is found beyond the enclosure, pointing toward the woods. Its age relative to the animal tracks cannot be determined.

5 AFTER CLUE 6 — ASK

"What have you been doing as you take each clue in?"

WAIT FOR SOMETHING LIKE: "Putting them together."

THEN ASK: "For what purpose have you been doing that to each clue?"

WAIT FOR SOMETHING LIKE: "We've been putting the clues together to explain what happened."

6 CONSOLIDATION

NOW HAND OUT THE DAY 1 CHILD SHEET. Do not give it earlier. The worksheet comes only after your child has noticed this movement in their own thinking.

Return to the six clues in order. For each clue:

Have your child write what they thought the clue meant in the WHAT I FOUND MYSELF THINKING section. Let them record what they made of that clue, even letting them try to explain what they think may have happened. Do not correct their interpretation or look for a particular answer. The purpose is for your child to look back at their own thinking and see the difference between what the clue gave them and what they did with it.

When the sheet is complete, reinforce the discovery from the lesson:
"When we put facts together to explain what happened, we move beyond the facts themselves. This is called inference."

DAY 1: THE IMPULSE TO EXPLAIN

Evidence Cards

CLUE 1

A goat is missing from a damaged enclosure. The gate is still latched. No blood or remains are visible.

DAY 1

CLUE 2

In the goat enclosure, several of the rear boards are broken. The boards are bent outwards. Other damage is harder to read, and the direction of force is not uniform.

DAY 1

CLUE 3

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CLUE 4

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DAY 1

CLUE 5

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DAY 1

CLUE 6

A partial boot print is found beyond the enclosure, pointing toward the woods. Its age relative to the animal tracks cannot be determined.

DAY 1

DAY 2 OF 3
OTHER PEOPLE'S ACCOUNTS

DAY 2
Notice the inferential impulse in others: other people naturally interpret what they experience when they report it to us.

PARENT ONLY — PURPOSE
Your goal today is for your child to notice that other people also try to make sense of what they experience. Their accounts can add valuable information, but they can also include what the person thinks the experience means.

SCRIPT
Begin here with your child

1 **READ**
You noticed how you tried to make sense of the evidence by putting facts together and moving beyond the facts to explain what happened. Remember, this is called inference. We can also call it interpretation.

2 **ASK**
"Listen carefully to what each person tells us. What can their accounts add to what we have?"

WAIT FOR SOMETHING LIKE: "They can tell us things about what happened that we did not see ourselves." Do not continue until your child gives an adequate answer.

3 **DISTRIBUTE THE SIX CLUES**
Read the clues in order. After each clue, allow your child to respond before continuing.

4 **CLUE 7** Mrs. Vale says, "I heard a terrible animal scream after dark. Whatever made it sounded hurt or angry." She did not see the source.

CLUE 8 Mr. Dale says, "I heard what must have been the same sound. To me it sounded like a person screaming." He also did not see the source.

5 **STOP — NOTICE**
ASK: "These people experienced something. Do they all make the same thing of what they experienced?"

WAIT FOR SOMETHING LIKE: "No. They experienced something, but they do not all interpret it the same way." Do not continue until your child gives an adequate answer.

6 **CLUE 9**
A hunter says, "I saw a large dark shape moving between the trees. I'm nearly certain it was a bear." He saw it for only a few seconds and never clearly saw its head.

CLUE 10
A child says, "I saw a light moving through the woods later that night. Someone was out there with a lantern." She saw the light but not the person carrying it.

7 **STOP — NOTICE**
ASK: "What in these reports seems available for us to take seriously, and what seems to be the witness making inferences?"

WAIT FOR SOMETHING LIKE: "We can take seriously what they actually heard or saw, but what they say it was is their interpretation." Do not continue until your child gives an adequate answer.

8 **CLUE 11**
Mr. Miller says, "I checked the enclosure before sunset. It was secure. Something broke in and took my goat." Several hours passed between his check and the disturbance.

CLUE 12
A woodsman says, "There have been signs of bear activity near the creek this week, but the tracks by the enclosure are not clear enough for me to call them bear tracks."

9 **AFTER CLUE 12 — ASK**
"How have these accounts strengthened, weakened, or changed what you were thinking yesterday?"

WAIT FOR SOMETHING LIKE: "Some of the accounts support what I thought, some make it less certain, and some make other explanations possible."

THEN ASK: "We know that we want to make sense of things. Do other people seem to want to, too?"

WAIT FOR SOMETHING LIKE: "Yes. They are also trying to make sense of what they experienced."

10 CONSOLIDATION

NOW HAND OUT THE DAY 2 CHILD SHEET. Do not give it earlier. The worksheet comes only after your child has noticed that other people also interpret what they experience.
Give your child the sheet and return to the six clues (clues 7-12) in order.

For each clue:
In WHAT SEEMS KNOWABLE BASED ON THE CLUE, have your child record what the person actually saw, heard, or knew.

In WHAT SEEMS INTERPRETED, have them record how that person interpreted the experience. Do not decide for your child which parts belong in each column. If they struggle, return to the clues and ask: “What did this person actually experience?” Then ask: “What did they make of it?”

Explain this in your own words to your child: Other people also infer. Their accounts can tell us things we did not experience ourselves, but their reports can include both what they experienced and what they think that experience means. Secondhand accounts therefore give us information while also leaving room for uncertainty.

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DAY 2: OTHER PEOPLE'S ACCOUNTS

Evidence Cards

CLUE 7

Mrs. Vale says, "I heard a terrible animal scream after dark. Whatever made it sounded hurt or angry." She did not see the source.

DAY 2

CLUE 8

Mr. Dale says, "I heard what must have been the same sound. To me it sounded like a person screaming." He also did not see the source.

DAY 2

CLUE 9

A hunter says, "I saw a large dark shape moving between the trees. I'm nearly certain it was a bear." He saw it for only a few seconds and never clearly saw its head.

DAY 2

CLUE 10

A child says, "I saw a light moving through the woods later that night. Someone was out there with a lantern." She saw the light but not the person carrying it.

DAY 2

CLUE 11

Mr. Miller says, "I checked the enclosure before sunset. It was secure. Something broke in and took my goat." Several hours passed between his check and the disturbance.

DAY 2

CLUE 12

A woodsman says, "There have been signs of bear activity near the creek this week, but the tracks by the enclosure are not clear enough for me to call them bear tracks."

DAY 2

DAY 3 OF 3
HOW SHOULD WE ORGANIZE OUR THINKING?

DAY 3
Notice the limits of inference: sometimes the evidence supports several possibilities without allowing us to determine what actually happened.

PARENT ONLY — PURPOSE
Your goal today is for your child to earn a way of organizing inquiry: WHAT WE KNOW, WHAT WE THINK IS THE CASE, and WHAT MIGHT BE. Then let the final evidence and the mayor's questions press them until they recognize that the central event cannot be determined with certainty.

Then, using the evidence available, students will provide advice to the mayor regarding what to do in light of the evidence.

SCRIPT
Begin here with your child

1 **READ**
We know people know things and that they believe things, and that they believe things they arrive at through inference. That includes you and the people whose accounts we heard.

2 **ASK**
"Given that, how do we organize our thinking in the best way to address potential problems that could arise?"

If stuck:

"Look back at some of the things we've said happened. Are we equally sure about all of them?"

Or

"Pick two things you've said about the mystery that you are not equally sure about. What is different about them?"

If they identify something like *"We know the goat disappeared, but we only think a bear took it"*:

"Good. Are all of the things we've considered going to fit into just those two groups?"

2

Now the third category has a chance to emerge as a problem encountered by the student. They may recognize that *a monster did it* cannot be treated exactly like *a bear probably did it*. One is a live possibility; the other may be their currently favored account.

Only after they discover that difficulty should the parent ask:

"So do we need another place for those?"

Then the terminology can stabilize what they have discovered:

WHAT WE KNOW
WHAT WE THINK IS THE CASE
WHAT MIGHT BE THE CASE

3

DAY 3 EXERCISE
Use a whiteboard, chalkboard, or large piece of paper. Divide it into three sections:
KNOW | THINK | MIGHT BE

Begin by returning to the evidence from Days 1 and 2. Have your child decide what belongs in each category.

Do not place whole clues on the board. A single clue may contain several different elements. Your child should separate what the clue provides from what can be inferred from it and place each element where they think it belongs.

KNOW: What does the evidence allow us to say happened?
THINK: What do we think is the case based on the evidence?
MIGHT BE: What remains possible but is not established strongly enough for us to think it is the case?

Let your child make these judgments. Do not tell them where an item belongs. If they struggle, return to the evidence and ask what it actually establishes and how strongly it supports what they are saying.

Once the evidence from Days 1 and 2 has been organized, begin Day 3. Give the new clues one at a time. After each clue, allow your child to add new information and inferences to the board and to move or revise earlier entries if the new evidence changes how strongly they can be supported.

The board should remain open to revision throughout the investigation. The goal is not to fill each category evenly or reach a final explanation. It is to keep each claim where the available evidence warrants it.

4

CLUE 13 The dark hair from the fence has been identified and found to be consistent with local black bear hair.

CLUE 14
The torn fabric is identified as material used in an older style of hunting coat. Several people in the area own similar coats; no owner can be established.

CLUE 15
Clear bear tracks are found farther into the woods, but no one can establish that they are the same trackway as the damaged impressions near the enclosure.

CLUE 16
The missing goat is found alive deep in the woods with superficial injuries. None can be confidently identified as predator wounds.

CLUE 17
Near where the goat is found are disturbed vegetation and another large, indistinct track unlike the clear bear tracks nearby. Its cause cannot be determined.

CLUE 18
When asked when they heard or saw what they reported, none of the witnesses had checked a clock. Mrs. Vale says the scream was 'sometime after dark.' Mr. Dale says it was 'late.' The hunter says he saw the dark shape 'around dusk.' The child remembers seeing the light 'after everyone had gone inside.'

5 **THE MAYOR TAKES OVER**
The evidence is in. Now the town wants an answer.

PARENT ROLE

From this point forward, play Mayor Bell. The mayor needs to know what happened because acting on the wrong conclusion could harm an innocent person or animal. Press the child's account. Do not tell them to be uncertain. Make them discover the limits of what the evidence warrants.

6

MAYOR BELL
“Hey, so what happened?”

When your child gives an account, ask: “How did you figure that out?”

Evaluate how persuasive the evidence actually is. Your two appropriate responses to a supported hypothesis are:
• “That’s possible.”
• “That’s likely.”

Then keep asking: “But what do we know happened?”

6 If the child claims certainty, continue pressing until they either say they do not know what actually happened or reduce the account to what can be confirmed.

The child can move forward when they can express what they know happened, what they think is possible, and what they think is likely.

7 **THE MAYOR'S FINAL CHALLENGE**
Your judgment has consequences.

PARENT ROLE

The mayor now has to act. A person or animal could be harmed if the town treats a possibility as definite. Stay in character as Mayor Bell. The goal is to get your child to recognize all the things they know and what can be acted upon reasonably.
If the fence is broken, then the fence can be mended.
If the goat hasn't been returned to its proper owner, then return the goat.
There's a bear nearby, we need to figure out how to ensure that the bear doesn't venture into the town.

Advice that's not justified:
Your child shouldn't advise the mayor to go on a man hunt.
The mayor shouldn't alarm people that there could be a monster.
Organizing the town into going on a bear hunt.

8 **MAYOR BELL ASKS**
What do we need to do?

If your child says yes, ask: "How did you figure that out?" If the evidence supports the hypothesis, respond only with "That's possible" or "That's likely." Then ask: "But what do we know happened?"

Ask as support questions if needed:

MAYOR BELL ASKS
Do we need to alert the town to a monster?

"Why is that the action we should perform given what we know?" Respond to a supported hypothesis with "That's possible" or "That's likely." Then ask: "But what do we know happened?"

MAYOR BELL ASKS
Is someone among us a goat thief?

"Why is that the action we should perform given what we know?" Respond to a supported hypothesis with "That's possible" or "That's likely." Then ask: "But what do we know happened?"

9 **SUCCESS!**

Treat uncertainty and action that is justified by the facts as success. Explain that mature judgment includes being able to say "I don't know" when the evidence does not justify certainty, especially when acting on limited information could cause harm. Mature judgment also requires knowing where, when there may be lots of uncertainty, we can act with confidence. Your child has succeeded by refusing to claim more than the evidence supports and to not act beyond what is warranted.

10 **CONSOLIDATION**

Return to the investigation with your child. Explain that what we say should be no stronger than what our evidence allows. Something **could be** the case, **is likely** the case, or **is** the case. Good judgment means knowing the difference.

The strength of our language should match the strength of our evidence. Sometimes the evidence does not allow us to say what happened. When that happens, remaining uncertain is not a failure to reach a judgment. **This is responsible judgment.**

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DAY 3: HOW SHOULD WE ORGANIZE OUR THINKING?

Evidence Cards

CLUE 13

The dark hair from the fence has been identified and found to be consistent with local black bear hair.

DAY 3

CLUE 14

The torn fabric is identified as material used in an older style of hunting coat. Several people in the area own similar coats; no owner can be established.

DAY 3

CLUE 15

Clear bear tracks are found farther into the woods, but no one can establish that they are the same trackway as the damaged impressions near the enclosure.

DAY 3

CLUE 16

The missing goat is found alive deep in the woods with superficial injuries. None can be confidently identified as predator wounds.

DAY 3

CLUE 17

Near where the goat is found are disturbed vegetation and another large, indistinct track unlike the clear bear tracks nearby. Its cause cannot be determined.

DAY 3

CLUE 18

When asked when they heard or saw what they reported, none of the witnesses had checked a clock. Mrs. Vale says the scream was 'sometime after dark.' Mr. Dale says it was 'late.' The hunter says he saw the dark shape 'around dusk.' The child remembers seeing the light 'after everyone had gone inside.'

DAY 3

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE UNTIL THE STUDENT HAS ACHIEVED THE LESSON'S NOTICING PHASE

DAY 1 CHILD SHEET
What I Noticed

INVESTIGATOR DATE

CLUE	WHAT I FOUND MYSELF THINKING
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE UNTIL THE STUDENT HAS ACHIEVED THE LESSON'S NOTICING PHASE

DAY 2 CHILD SHEET

Other People's Accounts

INVESTIGATOR DATE

ACCOUNT	WHAT SEEMS KNOWABLE FROM IT	WHAT SEEMS INTERPRETED
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

TROUBLESHOOTING
Parent Help: Only If You Need It

IF YOUR CHILD ASKS, “AM I RIGHT?”	Ask: “What makes you think that?”
IF YOUR CHILD CHANGES THEIR MIND	Ask: “What changed your thinking?”
IF YOUR CHILD WANTS TO SETTLE TOO QUICKLY	Ask: “What would we have to know to be sure?”
IF YOUR CHILD ISN’T SURE	Let the uncertainty stand. Do not resolve it for them.
THEY MAKE A CLAIM YOU DIDN’T EXPECT	Ask: “What makes you think that?” Keep going if they can connect it to evidence.
THEY WANT TO SAY SOME ANSWER IS DEFINITE	Return to the experience: “What did you notice yourself doing?” Do not supply the Day 3 categories early.
THEY SAY ‘WE CAN’T KNOW ANYTHING’	Ask: “Could anything else be the case?” Return to the particulars: “You don’t know anything? That seems strange. Tell me if there’s anything you do know.”
THEY REMAIN UNCERTAIN AT THE END	That is acceptable when they can explain why the evidence does not warrant a final determination but they can explain that there are some things they can know (e.g. goat disappearing, fence broken, bear activity, etc.)

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