



MYSTERY OF THE BLUE SCARAB

Written by Lee Miller

TEXT TYPE: Fiction: Narrative—Mystery Story

GUIDED READING LEVEL: W/X

SUMMARY: Essam, the son of a famous Egyptian archaeologist, discovers a mysterious blue scarab amulet while walking behind Pharaoh Khufu's pyramid. Anxious to learn more about the amulet, Essam shares his discovery with his best friend, Farid. Soon the boys begin working secretly to uncover the hidden tomb of Kai, an advisor to Pharaoh Khufu. The boys must work quickly to save this important historical site from destruction, as Essam's brother, Adel, is determined to sabotage their secret operation, and a group of businessmen have made plans to build a hotel where this archaeological find is hidden. Just in time, Essam and Farid unravel the mystery of the blue scarab and save Kai's tomb.

TEXT FEATURES

- chapters
- dialogue
- italics
- letter of complaint
- poster text

VISUAL LITERACY

- map/inset map

TEXT SUPPORTS

- sequential plot
- descriptive language

POSSIBLE TEXT CHALLENGES

- lack of background knowledge related to Egyptian culture (past and present)
- challenging vocabulary (for both word recognition and meaning)
- difficult pronunciations (e.g., 'Khufu,' 'El-Mahraby,' 'Khan el-Khalili Souk')
- complex sentence structures

FOCUS COMPREHENSION STRATEGY

- inferring

FURTHER COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

- predicting
- making connections: text to world, text to text

ORAL LANGUAGE OPPORTUNITIES

- Say Something strategy
- Place Mat strategy
- sharing ideas
- Reader's Theatre activity (option 3 in Focused Rereading)

WORKING WITH WORDS

- language predictability: using context to work out word meanings
- language predictability: using dictionaries to solve word meanings

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Observe each student's ability to:

- blend relevant background knowledge and text clues to make inferences
- read 'between the lines' to solve events of a mystery
- revise inferences as needed
- make and revisit/revise predictions
- note ways that punctuation affects the reading and understanding of a text

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Select from the following:

- Inferring Strategy Checklist
- Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record

First Session (pages 3–15)

Predicting and Making Connections: Text to World and Text to Text

Language Predictability

BEFORE READING

Activate and build prior knowledge

- Display the front cover. Invite students to predict what the book could be about based on the title and cover illustration. Provide students with appropriate prompts. Ask, *What details do you notice in the front cover illustration? How does the title help you to make a prediction?* Invite students to discuss their predictions. Next, read the back cover blurb together. Encourage students to revise their predictions at this stage, and as they continue to read on, if needed.
- Instruct students to make connections by activating prior knowledge related to ancient Egyptian culture. Ask, *What do you know about this time period that may help you to understand the story? What is the role of an archaeologist?*
- Activate prior knowledge related to mystery stories. Ask, *What mystery stories have you seen, heard, or read? What do you know about the features of this type of narrative?*

Introduce supports and challenges

- Direct students to page 3 of the text. Locate the word ‘necropolis’ (a large ancient cemetery). Encourage students to use context clues and a range of strategies (e.g., their own background knowledge, and carefully reading and considering surrounding sentences) to predict the meaning of this word. Provide an opportunity for students to share their ideas as to its meaning. Direct students to use a dictionary (print or on-line) to locate or confirm the meaning of this word. Explain to students that there will be some challenging words in this text. When reading, it will be important to use clues in the text, as well as a secondary resource (such as a dictionary), to help determine the meaning of unknown words.

ESL NOTE: Review challenging vocabulary related to ancient Egypt using pictures with the words printed at the bottom (‘scarab,’ ‘Pharaoh,’ ‘Sphinx,’ ‘necropolis,’ and so on). Discuss their meanings.

Inferring

Set a purpose for reading

- Talk about the importance of reading ‘like a detective’ in order to solve the mystery. Say, *In a mystery story, the author provides clues and information for the reader. The reader must use the clues in the text to work out what might be happening. This strategy is called inferring, or ‘using clues.’*

- Create a version of the chart seen below on a whiteboard or class wall. While reading, students will use their own version of this chart to record clues, information, and inferences about the three riddles mentioned on pages 3–4. Model how to use the organizer. Say, *In Chapter 1 the author said that the foreign men in suits were standing in the shadow of the pyramid, sweating profusely. I am going to record this information on my chart. I am inferring that these men are hiding, because they are standing in the dark. I am also inferring that they might be nervous because I know that when people are really nervous they sweat. I will write these inferences in the proper column.* Tell students to record new clues, information, and inferences on their own versions of this chart as they read chapters 1–3, revising their inferences as they read if needed.

Story Riddle	Information and Clues from the Text	Inferences
Red Paint		
Foreign Men in Dark Suits		
Blue Scarab Amulet		

Provide for early finishers

- Invite the early finishers to share clues and inferences recorded on their charts with each other. Encourage early finishers to explain their inferences to each other.

DURING READING

Monitor reading

- Have each student read a portion of the text aloud to you. Always provide a comprehension prompt that highlights the focus comprehension strategy (inferring), e.g., *What clues did the author give to show how Essam feels about his brother? How do you know that the blue scarab is an important artifact? What do you think the men in suits might be doing at the pyramids?*

Observe

- Make observations on your assessment tools. (See the Inferring Strategy Checklist and the Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record in the *Grade 5 Literacy Support Guide*.)
- Note any successful reading strategies you observe, e.g., students using context and other strategies to determine word meanings, students sharing appropriate examples of new clues or information regarding the three riddles, students using their background knowledge, combined with new clues or information, to make inferences.

AFTER READING

Inferring

Revisit the purpose for reading

- Direct students to share the inferences recorded on their charts. Be sure to direct students to provide supporting facts and background knowledge they might have used to arrive at their inferences. The Say Something strategy provides an effective structure for facilitating this discussion (see Oral Language Strategies in the *Grade 5 Literacy Support Guide*).

Check on outstanding challenges

- Did students have difficulty making inferences using story clues and their background knowledge?
- Revisit the importance of using context clues and other strategies, including print or on-line dictionaries, to determine word meanings. Ask, *What challenging words did you find in the text? What strategies helped you to determine the meaning of these words? Did you use a dictionary?*
- Invite each student to share one challenging word from the text. Begin a group list of these words, along with their meanings. Keep this list for use in the following sessions.

Note successful strategy use

- Explain a successful reading strategy you observed, e.g., *When Gareth was reading he noticed an important clue about the blue scarab on page 8. Gareth stopped reading and noted the fact that Essam found the blue scarab west of the Sphinx, behind Khufu's pyramid. Gareth shared his thinking about this new clue. He inferred that perhaps the men in dark suits were looking for this amulet. He remembered reading that these men had been seen standing in the dark shadows of this pyramid.*

Optional Approach

Inferring

You may wish to have students read the rest of the text independently. Set a purpose for reading and choose a date to come back together to discuss and work with the text using the Optional After Reading session (see page 7). It is recommended that you do some diagnostic work with students or hold a book discussion halfway through to check their comprehension of the text.

Setting a Purpose

Work with students to record new clues, information, and inferences for the remainder of the mystery. Instruct students to use the chart started to record their inferences, revising inferences as they read on if needed.

Second Session (pages 16–28)

Key events

- Three mysterious riddles are unfolding in Egypt (red paint on the pyramids, mysterious men dressed in dark suits, and a blue scarab ornament found west of the Sphinx). Essam shares the discovery of the scarab with his best friend, Farid. The boys decide to explore Giza to find clues about the ornament. While looking for clues, Essam falls into an undiscovered burial tomb. The boys make a pact to prove that the scarab and the tomb are real.

Introduce supports and challenges

Inferring

- Review why it is important for readers to use the clues given, as well as their own background knowledge and experiences to make inferences. Discuss how inferring allows the reader to fill in the gaps left by the author. When inferring, the reader is actively trying to figure out information or events. Explain that some people describe inferring as ‘reading between the lines.’ Ask, *How did you ‘read between the lines’ so far in your reading of this mystery?* Invite students to locate a specific sentence or statement from the text, and share their thinking with the rest of the group.

Text Features

- Direct students to page 17 of the text. Locate the first paragraph on this page. Ask students to identify the varying types of punctuation used by the author. Note the use of the colon. The colon can help the author to communicate a complete thought, and one or more directly-related ideas.

Language Predictability

- Remind students to use context clues and other strategies, including use of dictionaries, to figure out the meaning of unknown words.

Set a purpose for reading

Inferring

- Instruct students to ‘read like a detective’ in order to locate and record more clues and information about the mysterious riddles presented in Chapter 1. Remind students to ‘read between the lines’ and record inferences on their chart.
- At the end of the session, invite students to share the clues, information, and inferences recorded on their chart. Ask, *Are there any inferences you changed or revised based on new information discovered in chapters 4–5?*
- As a group, revisit the word chart started in the first session. Ask, *Are there any new words we can add to our chart? What clues from the text or any other strategies can we use to determine the meaning of these words?*

Third Session (pages 29–43)

Text Features

Key events

- Essam and Farid begin exploring the hidden burial tomb. While they are digging out the sand, Adel shows up with his gang of friends. Essam urges his brother to leave, but Adel is determined to cause trouble. The police scare away Adel and his gang, and Essam and Farid continue to dig through the sand. They are excited to find a blue scarab painted on the wall of the tomb. For several days, the boys continue to explore the burial tomb. They find more murals decorating the walls. Farid goes to a museum in Cairo to research information about the blue scarab. Essam meets his best friend at the museum. The boys learn that the blue scarab is pictured in the Book of the Dead, dating back to the time of Khufu.

Introduce supports and challenges

- Direct students to page 38 of the text. Locate the last paragraph on this page. Ask students to identify the types of punctuation used by the author. Note the use of the dash. A dash can be used to show a sudden break in thought, or an interrupted quotation. Students may incorrectly identify this punctuation as a hyphen. Be sure to clarify the difference. Ask, *Why has the author used this form of punctuation? As a reader, how does this punctuation help you to understand the ideas in the text?*

Inferring

Set a purpose for reading

- Say, *In Chapter 6 Essam and his father have a conversation about the hidden burial tomb.* Remind students reading this chapter to ‘read between the lines’ to figure out how Essam is feeling. Ask, *How is Essam feeling when he is trying to tell his father about the hidden tomb? What clues does the author provide to help you infer how he is feeling?*
- At the end of the session revisit your purpose for reading. Using the Place Mat strategy (see Oral Language Strategies in the *Grade 5 Literacy Support Guide*), invite students to brainstorm a list of words to describe how Essam might be feeling during his conversation with his father. Provide students with the opportunity to locate and discuss clues in the text to support these inferences.
- As a group, revisit the first session’s inferences chart to add further clues, information, and inferences.

Fourth Session (pages 44–57)

Key events

- Essam decides that it is time to tell his father about the newly discovered tomb. He finds his father excavating at the Sphinx. As

Essam explains his discovery, his father is distracted by reporters. Frustrated, Essam walks home. Later that evening Essam meets with Farid. Together, they make a pact to excavate the site using a scientific approach. The next morning Essam assembles equipment and meets Farid at the tomb. For several days the boys work tirelessly to excavate the tomb. Finally, after days of hard work, the boys discover the hidden sarcophagus of who they believe is Kai, advisor to Pharaoh Khufu.

Text Features

Introduce supports and challenges

- Ask the group to turn to page 48 of the text (third last paragraph). Direct students to locate the word ‘*were*,’ and note that it is set in italics. Explain that among the reasons for setting font in italics is to emphasize a word, phrase, or even an entire passage. Ask, *How does showing this word in italics emphasize the word within the sentence? How would a reader go about reading this sentence?* Ask students to read the sentence aloud, as fluently as possible, putting appropriate emphasis on the italicized word. After this fluent reading exercise, discuss other reasons for italicizing text, including an indicator for speech or thoughts of a character, and citing titles in a sentence.

Predicting

Set a purpose for reading

- Invite students to predict how the story will end. Ask, *Why do you think that?* Encourage students to use the clues, information, and inferences recorded on their inferring organizer charts to justify their predictions.
- Instruct students to read the last two chapters in order to compare the story’s ending to their predictions.
- At the session’s end, revisit the difficult words list started in the first session. Are there any words from this session’s reading that should be added to the chart?

Optional After Reading

If students have completed the text independently, use the following After Reading Discussion and activity suggestions to support comprehension, word solving, and good reader strategies.

Inferring

Discuss: *How did you use the clues and information in the text to make inferences?* Invite students to share the clues, information, and inferences recorded on their organizers.

Self-monitoring

Ask, *What challenging words did you find in the text? What reading strategies helped you to determine the meaning of these words? Did you use a dictionary?*

FOCUSED REREADING

Three options are provided for focused rereading in the next Guided Reading lesson. Choose an activity that meets the needs of your students, or you might select a Reader Response activity from the *Grade 5 Literacy Support Guide*.

Synthesizing and Sequencing

Written

- Invite students to write a newspaper article recounting the exciting discovery of the hidden burial tomb. Ask students to answer who, what, where, when, why, and how questions in their article.

Inferring: Visualizing

Artistic

- At the beginning of Chapter 5, Essam and Farid uncover a mural that appears to cover an entire wall of the tomb. Direct students to reread this section of the text. Discuss the descriptive language used by the author. Direct students to close their eyes and visualize this mural. Ask, *Can you describe the mural? What words in the text are helping you to visualize the mural?* Invite students to create an illustration of the mural they have visualized.

Inferring and Analyzing

Oral/dramatic

- In Chapter 6, Essam and his father have a conversation about the hidden burial tomb (pages 30–33). Direct students to reread this section of text. Discuss the use of punctuation (quotation marks, dashes, question marks, exclamation mark, ellipses). Instruct students to select character roles, and present this section of text as a Reader’s Theatre activity. Encourage students to use appropriate and relevant expressions and tones in their oral reading. After reading, pose the question to students: *How does the punctuation seen in this text help the reader to infer how the characters are feeling?*