



# Educators Guide

## About the **Capital Mysteries** by Ron Roy

A presidential conspiracy? Kidnapping, spies, and vandalism in our nation's capital? There is only one way to solve these Capital Mysteries—get KC Corcoran and her best friend Marshall Li on the case! KC wants to become a news reporter and is always on the lookout for anything suspicious, while Marshall, a spider lover, supportively tags along for the ride. This unstoppable team is inquisitive, resourceful, and persistent. Once KC's mother marries the President of the United States, KC and Marshall have an inside look at Washington, D.C., and all of the mysteries it holds.

## In the Classroom

Take your students on a journey through the historical sites of Washington, D.C., as KC and Marshall investigate and solve mysteries. Students will have the opportunity to explore the structure of mystery stories, develop their problem-solving skills, make interdisciplinary connections, and analyze literary elements in each of these exciting books. Here are lessons that can be used for just one book or for the entire series. Turn your students into true mystery lovers!

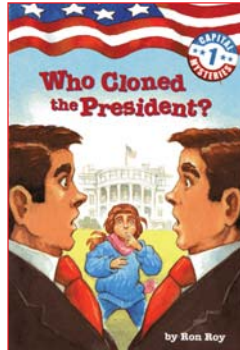
## Teacher Talk

"Mr. Roy, it is your books that have propelled my seven-year-olds to choose chapter books and read them on their own."—Diane Blair, second-grade reading teacher, St. Pius X Regional School, Bowie, Maryland

"My students are in love with this series!"—Arin Bizarri, second-grade teacher, Huber Ridge Elementary, Westerville, Ohio

## Grades 2–4





PB: 978-0-307-26510-4 (0-307-26510-2)

## WHO CLONED THE PRESIDENT?

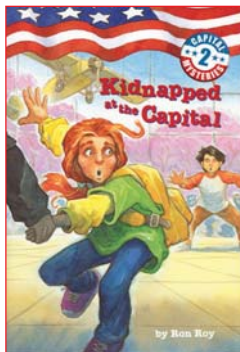
### About the Book

KC knows that something is wrong as she watches the president on TV. He just isn't quite himself. KC and Marshall soon realize that it isn't the president at all—it is a clone! But where is the real president? The kids are on the case.

### Character Traits

KC and Marshall save the president and they are given gold medals in recognition of their bravery. Discuss the character trait of bravery with your class. Ask students to describe a time when they had to be brave. Was their bravery recognized?

Have students make a medal in honor of a time when they were brave. Their name should be on one side, and a description of what they did should be on the other side. Hang this medal from a ribbon so that they can wear it!



PB: 978-0-307-26514-2 (0-307-26514-5)

**"This is a fun, accessible mystery for new readers. Attractive gray-wash illustrations appear throughout, and a map of the nation's capital is included."**  
—BOOKLIST

## KIDNAPPED AT THE CAPITAL

### About the Book

It is a lovely day at the Cherry Blossom Festival, until the president and KC's mother disappear. KC and Marshall search for clues and end up in the Air and Space Museum. There, they learn about a plot to steal the International Space Station. They not only have to find the kidnapers, they also have to save the world!

### Science

The kidnapers send a ransom note stating that they want to take over the International Space Station. Lead a discussion about the International Space Station, how it works, and its significance to the world. Would you want to live on the International Space Station? Why or why not? If you were going to live there and could bring five things from home, what would they be? After the discussion, have students write a paragraph answering the above questions.

## THE SKELETON IN THE SMITHSONIAN

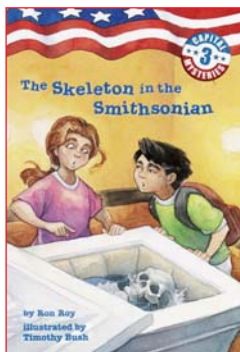
### About the Book

The money to build the Smithsonian Museum was given to Washington, D.C., many years ago, but now one man is claiming that the money belongs to him. He says he has DNA evidence to prove that he is a direct descendent of James Smithson. Can KC and Marshall save the Smithsonian Museum?

### Social Studies

KC and Marshall investigate Leonard Fisher's family line. Talk to your class about genealogy and sketch your own family tree on the board. Ask students how many members are in their extended family and who is their oldest living relative?

Ask students to interview someone at home and gather information about their extended family. With this information, help students create their own family tree using pictures, names, etc. Have them share their family trees with the class.



PB: 978-0-307-26517-3 (0-307-26517-X)  
GLB: 978-0-307-46517-7 (0-307-46517-9)



PB: 978-0-375-82557-6 (0-375-82557-6)  
GLB: 978-0-375-92557-3 (0-375-92557-0)

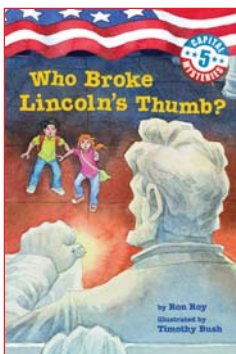
## A SPY IN THE WHITE HOUSE

### About the Book

The president and KC's mother are trying to keep their wedding details a secret from the public. But somehow information about their wedding is getting out to the press. It is up to KC and Marshall to find the spy before the wedding is ruined.

### Writing

Ask students what they think are the important elements of a newspaper article. Bring in some articles to share. Discuss the elements that are usually included in the articles—title, author, location, date, photograph, description of the event, and interviews with witnesses. Have students write their own newspaper articles about the spy in the White House that include all of these important elements.



PB: 978-0-375-82558-3 (0-375-82558-4)  
GLB: 978-0-375-92558-0 (0-375-92558-9)

## WHO BROKE LINCOLN'S THUMB?

### About the Book

It is time for a party to honor Daniel Chester French, the sculptor of the Lincoln Memorial. But KC and Marshall discover that Lincoln's thumb is missing from the statue. Can they find the vandals before the celebration begins?

### Art

Ask students to sketch a picture of a familiar object such as a plane, house, car, etc. Then have them erase one element of that object—a wing from a plane, a door from a house, a wheel from a car. Give each child a chunk of clay and have them sculpt their object, making sure to leave out the missing element. Put the completed sculptures on display and have students guess what is missing from each one!



PB: 978-0-375-87527-4 (0-375-87527-1)  
GLB: 978-0-375-97527-1 (0-375-97527-6)

## FIREWORKS AT THE FBI

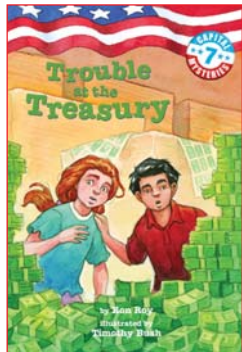
### About the Book

Mysterious rockets are shot out of the FBI building, and the only evidence is an empty pizza box. Meanwhile, names and phone numbers of Witness Protection Program members are being leaked. KC and Marshall must use their skills to solve this case.

### Community Service

KC and Marshall decide to adopt a greyhound from an organization that rescues the dogs after they stop racing at tracks. Have students research animal rescue facilities in your area. Have them gather information on these facilities including what animals are being rescued, where they are rescued from, how they find good homes, etc. Next ask your class spread the word about adoption opportunities using one or more of the ideas below:

- ★ Create posters for your school promoting animal adoption
- ★ Write a brochure featuring the details of the various animal rescue facilities and make photocopies to send home with the students
- ★ Schedule a field trip to one of the animal rescue facilities
- ★ Host a school assembly to share the class's findings



PB: 978-0-375-83969-6 (0-375-83969-0)  
 GLB: 978-0-375-93969-3 (0-375-93969-5)

## TROUBLE AT THE TREASURY

### About the Book

After a short tour at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, KC and Marshall learn that money has mysteriously disappeared from the cutting room floor. They elicit the help of Casey Marshall, the president's clone, to get them into the BEP to investigate the case.

### Math

The machines at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing are making \$100 bills. Each sheet of money contains 32 \$100 bills. Those bills are then cut and stacked into bricks containing 1,000 bills.

Present the following math question to your class: If the Treasury continued to print \$100 bills every day, about how much money do you think would be made in a week? In a month? In a year? (These should all be estimates)

Work with your students to calculate how much money one sheet represents. Then model the process of calculating how much money is in one brick. We know from the book that the Treasury makes about \$700,000,000 every day. Break students into partners and ask them to figure out, using a calculator, how much money could be made in one week, one month, and one year. Then bring the class together and ask partners to share their answers and strategies. Be sure to practice writing and saying very large numbers!

- ★ One sheet:  $32 \times \$100 = \$3,200$
- ★ One brick:  $1,000 \times \$100 = \$100,000$
- ★ One week:  $7 \times \$700,000,000 = \$4,900,000,000$
- ★ One month:  $30 \times \$700,000,000 = \$21,000,000,000$   
 or  $4 \times \$4,900,000,000 = \$19,600,000,000$
- ★ One year:  $52 \times \$4,900,000,000 = \$254,800,000,000$   
 or  $365 \times \$700,000,000 = \$255,500,000,000$



PB: 978-0-375-83970-2 (0-375-83970-4)  
 GLB: 978-0-375-93970-9 (0-375-93970-9)

## MYSTERY AT THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT

### About the Book

A monkey in the Washington Monument? KC and Marshall travel to the National Zoo and Library of Congress to piece clues together in order to solve the mystery of the monkey. What they find goes back almost 100 years to the construction of the monument itself.

### Poetry

Show students examples of acrostic poems. As a class, write an acrostic poem using your name, the school's name, etc. Then have each student write an acrostic poem about Washington, the monkey. They should re-read *Mystery at the Washington Monument* to help them think of adjectives and verbs that are associated with the monkey. These poems can then be decorated with appropriate illustrations and displayed in the classroom.

Illustrations © 2001-2007 by Timothy Bush.



## **Social Studies: Washington, D.C., Research**

The Capital Mysteries take place at different historic sites in Washington, D.C. Each story not only describes this location, but also interweaves detailed information about its history, significance, and current use. In the back of the books, there is a nonfiction section entitled “Did You Know?” in which these locations are further described. Gather reference books from the library about Washington, D.C. Assign each student or group of students one historic site to research based on the mystery they are reading. Have them write a report about what they learn and create a presentation to share. Make a poster of the Washington, D.C., map located in the front of each book to display in the classroom during this activity.

### **Research topics:**

- ★ **Book #1:** President of the United States
- ★ **Book #2:** Cherry Blossom Festival, Air and Space Museum
- ★ **Book #3:** Smithsonian Museum
- ★ **Book #4:** White House
- ★ **Book #5:** Lincoln Memorial
- ★ **Book #6:** Federal Bureau of Investigation
- ★ **Book #7:** Bureau of Engraving and Printing (Treasury)
- ★ **Book #8:** Washington Monument, Library of Congress, National Zoo

## **Literature Circles: Book Detectives**

Literature Circles are great tools for learning at any age. Collaborative reading and sharing enhances the literary experience for children and teaches them how to be responsible for their own learning. Break your class into groups and assign each group a different Capital Mysteries book. Give them a reading assignment to complete in class each day, either by page or by chapter. They can read in a “round robin” style where each student in the group reads a page, a “partner read” where group members read together in pairs, or an “individual read” where each student reads on their own at their own pace. Then have students select one task from the Book Detectives Tasks list on page 6 to complete based on that day’s reading assignment. These assignments can be shared within the Literature Circle the next day. Continue in this manner until the book is finished and each student has completed all the tasks.

## **Character Study: Character Maps for KC and Marshall**

Throughout this series, readers learn a great deal about KC and Marshall. By examining these characters, they are able to relate to them and can begin to predict what they will do next. Start by modeling the process of creating a character map by making one of yourself, a student, etc. Write the character’s name in the center of the page and label two personality traits of that character. For each one of these, find evidence in the story that demonstrates that trait and describe it in the connected boxes. Students should complete one character map for KC and one for Marshall using the reproducible activity sheet on page 6. Allow students to choose which character they most relate to, and then have them write a paragraph describing that character and title it “All About KC Corcoran” or “All About Marshall Li.”

## **Plot Analysis: Beginning, Middle, and End of Comic Strips**

Each of the books in this series follows the same format. The beginning provides some background information about the story and introduces the mystery, the middle describes how the mystery is going to be solved, and the end reveals the solution to the mystery. Select one Capital Mysteries book for the whole class or divide students into groups, giving each group a different book. Have students read and identify the main ideas from the beginning, middle, and end of the book. They can use these events to create a three-box comic strip (poster or letter size) consisting of illustrations and talking bubbles. Discuss the comic strip plots as a class, focusing on the beginning, middle, and end format. Then ask students to write their own mystery story using the same format.

Guide prepared by Jamie Sussman who has taught third, fourth, and fifth grades in both public and private schools in New York and Colorado.  
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**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Book Detective Tasks

**Directions:** As you read each Capital Mysteries book, choose one of the following roles and complete the book detective task you are given.

- ★ **Reporter:** Write a summary of the chapter or pages that you read. This should include a topic sentence, main ideas, and a concluding sentence.
- ★ **Fortune-Teller:** Make a prediction for the next chapter or pages in the book. Explain what your prediction is based on.
- ★ **Word Wizard:** Find three words that you don't know in the chapter or pages that you read. Look them up in the dictionary and write their definitions.
- ★ **Illustrator:** Find a scene in the chapter or pages you read that stood out in your mind. Draw a detailed picture of it and label the drawing with three sentences that describe the scene.
- ★ **Interrogator:** Ask two to three questions about what you read. These can be wonderings, "why's," or anything else that comes to mind.
- ★ **Critic:** Make a connection to an event in the chapter or pages that you read. This can be a text-to-self, text-to-text, or text-to-world connection.
- ★ **Discussion Director:** It is your job to lead the group discussion. Write at least three good "thinking" questions that will stimulate discussion about the chapters or pages you read. These questions should NOT have answers that can be found in the book.



### Character Maps

**Directions:** Define two personality traits of either KC or Marshall, and write one in each box. Find evidence in the Capital Mysteries books that demonstrates each trait and describe the evidence in the connected boxes.

	Trait:	
Character:		
	Trait:	