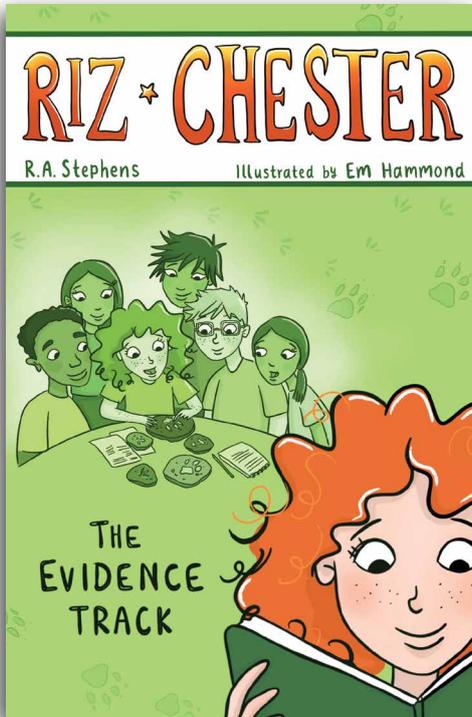

Teachers' Notes



RIZ CHESTER: THE EVIDENCE TRACK

R.A. Stephens / Em Hammond

ISBN: 9781761111525

Recommended retail: \$12.99

Reading level: 6 to 8

BOOK SUMMARY

Riz Chester loves mysteries, and with an interest in forensics she keeps finding crime. But nothing has happened for months. With Riz and her friends itching for a mystery to solve, Riz organises the perfect forensic party for her friends. Even her brother, Pax, is joining and Mum and Dad are helping.

But when the news reports a real theft at the petrol station, and some unknown tracks are in the freshly laid dirt outside Riz's house, everyone gets involved to find out what happened. What can the tracks tell them? And will they find out enough to catch the thief?

THEMES

Friendship • Problem solving • Confidence • Mystery • Science

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**R.A. Stephens is available for author talks and workshops.
Contact Wombat Books for more information.**

Riz Chester Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rochelle Stephens is the Director of Wombat Books and Rhiza Press. With qualifications in teaching, counselling, editing and publishing, Rochelle brings expertise and knowledge to her work in publishing and editing. Since pioneering Wombat Books, Rochelle has been actively involved in every aspect of story development and book production.

Rochelle has written for science textbooks and other educational texts and is passionate about making science and maths real for children. While Rochelle loves genres like fantasy, she believes that when it comes to science and maths there is so much to appreciate without any fantasy needed. In her experience there is fun to being observant and planning out how to approach a curious query - such as counterfeit money!

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Em Hammond is an Autistic Artist and Illustrator from the Hunter region, NSW. She is also a busy mum to three young kids, and a Speech Pathologist specialising in neurodiversity-affirming practice.

Em loves spending her spare time creating images and stories that spark imagination and whimsy. She grew up reading the magic that was Roald Dahl and Enid Blyton, and knew that she wanted to create magic between pages someday. She definitely spent a lot of time drawing in the margins of her schoolbooks when she should have been learning about mathematical concepts.

Em dreams of one day writing and illustrating picture books and middle grade fiction that shine a bright light onto Neurodivergent characters and experiences. Books are a special kind of magic and she hopes to make big, beautiful change in the world with her words and pictures.

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REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

Just like in the first Riz Chester book, Riz continues to notice things that most people don't. But this time, her observant brain already has a solid crew of friends to help her out and make her feel less self-conscious of her special observant skills. They use forensic skills, comparing fingerprints, to investigate a crime.

This series is great for beginner to intermediate readers and introduces readers to forensics and science concepts they might otherwise be unfamiliar with. Forensics is not usually introduced at such a young age but students generally really enjoy it once it is. Forensics is about more than just solving graphic crimes, it's about lifting anything from a crime scene that could help – a shoe print, facial recognition, tyre marks, or animal poop. Children can access mini detective kits to explore forensics and to introduce students to science.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS & LEARNING OUTCOMES

YEAR ONE

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1444	ACELA1451	ACELT1582	ACELY1656
ACELA1787	ACELA1452	ACELT1584	ACELY1788
ACELA1447	ACELA1458	ACELT1586	ACELY1660
ACELA1449	ACELT1581	ACELT1832	ACELA1454
ACHASSI022			

Science

ACSHE021	ACSHE022	ACSIS027	ACSIS213
ACSIS029			

YEAR TWO

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1461	ACELA1463	ACELT1833	ACELA1454
ACELA1462	ACELT1591	ACELY1665	
ACHASSI038			

Science

ACSHE034	ACSHE035	ACSIS039	ACSIS040
ACSIS041	ACSIS042		

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YEAR THREE

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELT1594	ACELY1676	ACELA1488	ACELY1675
ACELT1596			
ACHASSK093	ACHASSI059	ACHASSK070	ACHASSI080
ACHASSI060	ACHASSI056		

Science

ACSHE050	ACSHE051	AC SIS054	AC SIS055
AC SIS057	AC SIS215	AC SIS058	AC SIS060

YEAR FOUR

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1489	ACELA1491	ACELA1498	ACELT1603
ACELT1605	ACHASSI073	ACHASSI074	ACHASSI075

Science

ACSSU074	AC SIS064	AC SIS065	AC SIS066
AC SIS068	AC SIS216	AC SIS069	AC SIS071

TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
1. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
1. Ask students if they can recognize the setting of this story from the cover image.

AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Ask students if Riz or her friends remind them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps.
1. What is their first impression of Riz? If they have read the first book and, has this book changed their opinion on Riz?
1. How do Riz and her friends change over the course of the story? See if you can use descriptive words to explain the change, e.g. confident, involved, thoughtful, energetic
1. Ask students what Riz' situation was. Does she overcome the challenges in the end?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- Riz's parents help her host a mystery solving party. In what ways does their support help Riz explore her interests and talents?
- Riz's group of friends now includes Pieter. How has Riz made Pieter feel comfortable in joining their friendship circle?
- In what ways did the children make sure they were safe while investigating this new incident?
- Can you describe Riz's relationship with her brother? Has it changed in any ways over the last three books?
- Do you know what a 'hypothesis' is? What do you think it is? After writing down your guess, look it up as a class.

FRIENDSHIP

- How does Riz show her care and appreciation for her friends?
- Can you name some of the ways in which Riz and her friends support one another?
- How have the different relationships within the friendship circle grown over the three books so far?
- Were there any new friendships or surprising friendships in *Riz Chester: The Evidence Track*?
- What are some of the ways that you can model how Riz and her friends help and support one another in your own friendships?

PROBLEM SOLVING

- Riz and her friends had quite a conundrum in this investigation! How did they approach their detective work?
- In what way does putting things in the right order and time sequences play in solving a mystery?
- Clues can be interpreted in lots of ways and depend on the way you think about them. How did Lochie and Sabrina change their thinking to come up with new theories?
- What can you learn from the methods Riz and the others use?

CONFIDENCE

- It seems that all of Riz's friends and Riz herself have grown more confident in *Riz Chester: The Evidence Track*. Why do you think that might be?
- How does their newfound confidence help the investigation? Why might that be?
- Which characters have grown the most confident in this new story?
- What are some of the ways someone can seem confident? Write down all the ways in which someone appears confident, for example, posture or voice.

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MYSTERY

- Do you know what a 'red herring' is? In a pair or group discuss what a red herring is and whether there were any red herrings in *Riz Chester: The Evidence Track*.
- What is the purpose of a red herring in a mystery story? Do you like them or dislike them?
- Tension is a big part of mystery stories. Describe what tension in a story is in your own words.
- What role does tension play in creating a good mystery? What moments of tension were in *Riz Chester*?
- Can you brainstorm some detective terms? Write down a list and see how many you can name.
- What are your favourite parts of a mystery? What were your favourite parts of the mystery in *Riz Chester: The Evidence Track*?

SCIENCE

- Riz and her friends make observations when conducting their investigation. As they explored they made inferences and proposed hypotheses.
 - a) If you don't know what 'inferences' are, look the word up. Inferences are often used by people as they try to explore an idea!
 - b) What inferences did Riz, Lachie, Lochie, Sabrina, Jenny, Pieter and Pax make?
 - c) How did these inferences help them come up with hypotheses?
 - d) Which hypothesis ended up being the right one?
- What kind of science is working with human and animal tracks? Is it more than one?
- Why might forensic science mean you need to have an understanding of different kinds of science?
- What part of forensic science excites you the most?
- When comparing shoe prints what are some things that make a shoe unique and investigators can look for?
- What are some differences between animal tracks that can help a detective determine what animal made the track?
- What are some ways to tell how fast an animal or person was moving when they made a print?
- If you want a quick overview of human and animal tracks you can [watch this video](#).

ACTIVITIES

MYSTERY PARTY

Plan your own mystery party!

Just like Riz you can plan a mystery party for you and your friends and do some forensic activities. These activities can include:

- fingerprints
- marking a board and comparing instruments
- footprints and moulding feet impressions
- animal track comparisons

TIMELINES

Using [one of these timelines](#) you can do some sequence activities!

Timelines are super important in mystery stories, and criminal investigations.

1. Create a timeline of the events of the crime in Riz Chester: The Evidence Track.
2. Plot the timeline to a crime for your own mystery story. This can help you write your story!
3. Think about an important event in your life. Write down the timeline for how it happened and create a mystery story around it.

ANIMAL TRACKS

In Australia we have many unique animals and their tracks are important to get to know! And to learn the differences between them and animals such as cats, dogs, rabbits and foxes.

1. Place some salt in a tub or box.
2. Collect a stick or pencil. Then print off some examples of Australian animal tracks and some other animal tracks. Try starting with: dog, cat, fox, rabbit, kangaroo, koala, possum, dingo, Tasmanian Devil, crocodile, green tree frog, echidna, platypus, wombat, emu.
3. In the salt use the stick or pencil to trace out the animal tracks one by one. In between you can ask someone to guess which one you drew.

WORKSHEETS

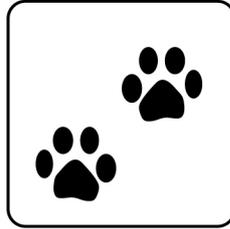
Below are some investigation worksheets for you to complete!



Shoes



Dog



Cat

Riz and her friends had to work out what kind of animals were going through her garden and compared size and distinguishing marks!

Animal tracks are distinctive! Track comparison can be used in forensics to work out who or what was in a particular location. At times there will be a range of tracks and only one track has anything to do with the crime.

Human shoe prints or feet are also useful for determining information at a crime scene.

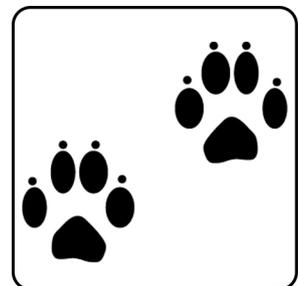
Fun Facts!

A step: distance between the heel of a foot to the heel of the other foot.
A stride: distance from the heel of a foot to the heel of that same foot (two steps)

How to Identify

Study the shape of each mark to understand how it is different and who it might belong to! In animals, check for toe marks and claw marks. In shoe prints, look for the pattern and ridges of the shoe. The shape can be different for all kinds of shoes (a boot, a tennis shoe and a high heel make different marks). The length and width of a print can help you determine how big the animal or person is. So can the length between prints and the width between prints (called the stride and the saddle). With some animals the front feet might seem bigger because they support more weight. With some shoes, broken areas, wear, or special brand marks can help find the culprit!

Which are which?



The above animal tracks were made by four distinct animals. Can you work out which were made by chickens, frogs, rabbits and kangaroos?

Some of these animals might seem similar to other animal tracks like cats, dogs, foxes, ducks! After guessing, look up some more animal tracks to compare.



This is a shoe print (not a shoe impression!).

See if you can:

- work out what kind of shoe it is
- jot down some distinguishing features
- guess how tall the person is
- guess how quickly the person was walking

Top tip!

Remember that speed can change a print. Running can make some parts blurred, some parts darker or deeper, and especially press on the toe or heel area. Walking is more clear and even.

If you choose to guess the stride, a stride will get longer if someone is running.

Remember

A stride is 2 steps and has to be from heel to heel of the same foot!

Hint, hint!

To estimate height you can multiply the length by 7.

Length: 25.9 cm
Width: 9.7 cm