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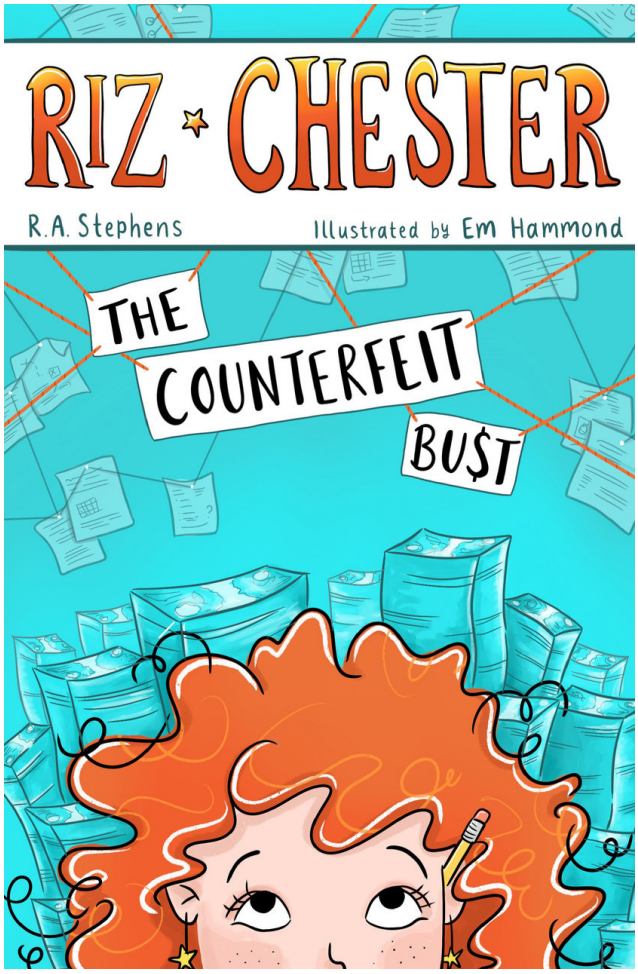
Teachers' Notes



Riz Chester: The Counterfeit Bust

R.A. Stephens / Em Hammond
ISBN: 9781761111181
Recommended retail: $12.99
Reading level: 6 to 8

Book Summary

Riz sometimes notices weird stuff. She can pick the twins apart, notices when people grow, and challenges the lunch staff when they change the cheese brand. Most people think it is odd, so she keeps her observations to herself.

But when Riz notices something different about her mum's cash, she speaks up only to get questioned by the police!

With her observations and a little help from some tech-savvy friends Riz leads the counterfeit bust. But can her team follow the right clues, or will it land them all in trouble?

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Contents

Reasons For Studying This Book

Riz Chester is a series about a little girl who recognises things that she can see, smell, or feel, but that other people don't notice. Riz is particularly observant. Throughout this story Riz discovers that she has a bit of a knack for solving mysteries. When Riz discovers that she has counterfeit money in her mums wallet she is lead on a mystery to solve who locally has been creating counterfeit money. When her and her friends start investigating they use skills such as making lists and research. In this process they discover that there's a lot more science involved in detective work than just a bit of a mystery. Forensics is the science of investigation and crime.

The series is great for beginner to intermediate readers and aims to introduce children to scientific concepts that they may otherwise not know or be unfamiliar with. Forensics is a popular area of science in older children, however an interest in science comes at a young age. The target audience for this first book in the Riz Chester series is aimed at encouraging that area of science at a younger age. Forensics isn't just about the bigger or more graphic crimes seen in adult shows and books, but anything that could give us information about a crime. This includes: a tyre mark, a track from an animal, counterfeit money, facial recognition and even just fingerprinting. Children have access to mini detective kits that can be used in schools or in families and these stories easily introduce students/children to science.

Themes

Friendship Problem solving Confidence Mystery Science

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 an amazing beauty in both without any fantasy needed and that when explored there is so much to appreciate. In her experience there is fun to being observant and planning out how to approach a curious query - such as using cash to solve a mystery. But she also feels that kids should be kids and explore things safely!

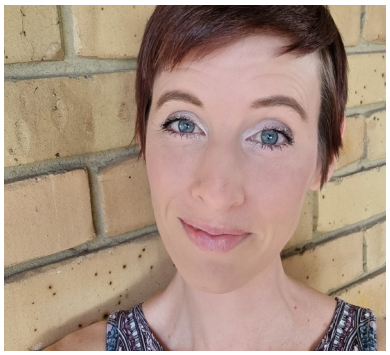
Author Note:

I crafted the new experience of exploring a mystery so the story could allow the five children to work together, get to know each other more and develop confidence as they go around and visit shops to try and work out where the counterfeit money comes from. The theme of science comes through very gently in this first story as counterfeit money is a concept that comes from forensic science however it's very simple. Creating counterfeit money is a complicated chemical and paperwork process that scientists do uncover, in this story the children don't get to understand fully how counterfeit works however it creates an opportunity to explore this area of science further.

Working with a group of people, making lists, and developing strategy, are also skills that can help children in confidence and understanding the concepts of science.

While I wrote forensics chapters in high school texts, all this information is simplified and aimed for younger children. Future books will look at facial recognition and fingerprinting. This novel aims to get students thinking about simple detective stories, what they like about them and how fantasy versus realistic scenarios show up in detective stories.

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.

Key Curriculum Areas:

CURRICULUM AREAS AND KEY 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		

Year Three

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELT1594	ACELY1676	ACELA1488	ACELY1675
ACELT1596			
ACHASSK093	ACHASSI059	ACHASSK070	ACHASSI080
ACHASSI060	ACHASSI056		

Science

ACSHE050	ACSHE051	ACSIS054	ACSIS055
ACSIS057	ACSIS215	ACSIS058	ACSIS060

Key Curriculum Areas:

CURRICULUM AREAS AND KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

Year Four

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1489	ACELA1491	ACELA1498	ACELT1603
ACELT1605	ACHASSI073	ACHASSI074	ACHASSI075

Science

ACSSU074	ACSIS064	ACSIS065	ACSIS066
ACSIS068	ACSIS216	ACSIS069	ACSIS071

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.
2. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
3. Ask students if they can recognize the setting of this story from the cover image.

After-reading Questions

4. Ask students if Riz or her friends remind them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps.
5. What is their first impression of Riz?
6. How does Riz change over the course of the story? Do any other characters change? See if you can use descriptive words to explain the change, e.g. confident, enthusiastic, self-assured.
7. Ask students how they perceive Riz's situation. Does she overcome the challenges in the end?

Discussion Questions

General

- Which character do you relate to most: Riz, Lachie A or Lochie C, Sabrina or Jenny? Do you find that you have any interest in science or technology or music? Did it help you to understand the story when you saw it from one of the children's perspective?
- If this story was going to be from anyone else's point of view who do you think it should be and why? What skills and ideas does that character bring to the team?
- Do you think something like this story could truly happen? Why or why not?
- Are you very observant? Name something that you've noticed before that other people haven't noticed.
- What area of science are you most interested in? Forensics as a science combines different areas together, using a range of biology, chemistry and physics! So while these are often seen as separate to each other they're all connected when it comes to solving mysteries.
- What did you think of the strategy to use a table to plan out the visits to the shops? Have you ever used a table to plan anything? Why do you think it would be helpful?
- Take five to ten minutes to research forensics and find out something about it that excites you and maybe your friends don't know. Take it in turns as a class or in a small group of friends to share what you've discovered.

Neurodivergent is a word to describe the way people's brains can be different. It is a type of biodiversity (living creatures being different in lots of ways). People who are neurodiverse might have autism, ADHD, tourettes, dyspraxia, dyscalculia or dyslexia. 30 to 40 percent of Australians are neurodiverse! (According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics) This video is for children about neurodivergence. And the sequel.

- Riz exhibits some neurodivergent traits - she observes things others don't, she picks up on extra sensory feelings and other 'weird stuff' she keeps in her log. Name a time when you have found something weird. Did anyone else pick up on it too? Why was it weird to you? Which things Riz notices and puts in her log did you find odd and which did you go, "no that's something I would think too."?

Discussion Questions

Friendship

- Before the story begins Riz used to do things with all of her friends - she used to time the school bells with Lochie and Lachie and she used to play with Sabrina and Jenny. Do you remember why she chose these friends to solve a mystery with? Why do you think she chose them? Do you think she made the right choice? If you were going to solve a mystery, who would you choose to do it with and why?
- If you're exploring new things like science and solving puzzles why is it important to have good friends with you? How does having a good friend help you? Maybe they make you feel supported and encouraged, maybe they have good ideas, or maybe it's good to be able to share something with someone you like?
- How does Riz's friendship with the other children change over the story? And why do you think it changes?
- Sabrina and Jenny are very close, they're identical twins! But even so, Riz can see differences between them, in looks, expression and personality. How important is it for your friend to notice things about you and how you can be different from other people? How might that help you? Maybe you get anxious talking in front of people and need a little extra encouragement, or maybe you don't really like how noisy the playground gets and you need the quiet of the library. Whatever it is, it can be nice when your friends notice your differences!

Problem Solving

- When you're faced with a problem what steps do you take to work out how to solve it? Does that change if it's a big problem or a small problem? Are you more like Riz and come up with a plan, maybe even write things down, or do you make it up as you go? What are the benefits of making lists and planning things?
- In what ways is a team stronger than an individual? Are teams better at tackling problems? Is it easier when more people work on a problem or is it harder? What are the benefits to having a team?
- When Riz didn't have a clear answer as to who the counterfeiters were, what did she do? Did she give up or adjust her plan? Sometimes when we're trying to solve a problem we need to be flexible and readjust. Is this easy or hard to do? In what ways can it be hard and how might you handle that?

Confidence

- Do you think you're a very confident person? Why or why not? Are you more confident in some places than others? Why might that be?
- Do up a nice tracker on a poster board with thirty days down the side. Write down something that you think is great about yourself, every day for thirty days. It might be that you're good at math, or you scored a point in your favourite sport, or you're a really good friend. At the end of thirty days read all the notes and see if you're feeling more confident. If one of your classmates or friends are struggling to come up with something during the thirty days, tell them what you think is great about them!
- Riz remarks they need to get better at acting and being more confident during their investigation. But at the end of the book they already seem to be getting more confident and at ease being detectives. Why do you think this happened? Do you think it had anything to do with helping find the counterfeiters and feeling accomplished?

Mystery

- Design a poster for a mystery book or movie that you would want to write - what's the mystery? Can you leave any clues in the poster? How would you solve it? Would you use any science like fingerprints, facial recognition, or handwriting analysis? Present your posters and mysteries in small groups and discuss solving them.
- Try to write an alternative scene if the group hadn't been picked up by security and come back again. How might that go?
- Think about some of your favourite detective and mystery stories - Friday Barnes, Enola Holmes, Ruby Redfort, A Series of Unfortunate Events, Nancy Drew, The Hardy Boys, The Butter O'Bryan Mysteries, Alex Rider, The Fowl Twins, or even Scooby Doo. What do you like about these mysteries? What are some examples of the fantasy of mystery versus the realistic and scientific detective work?

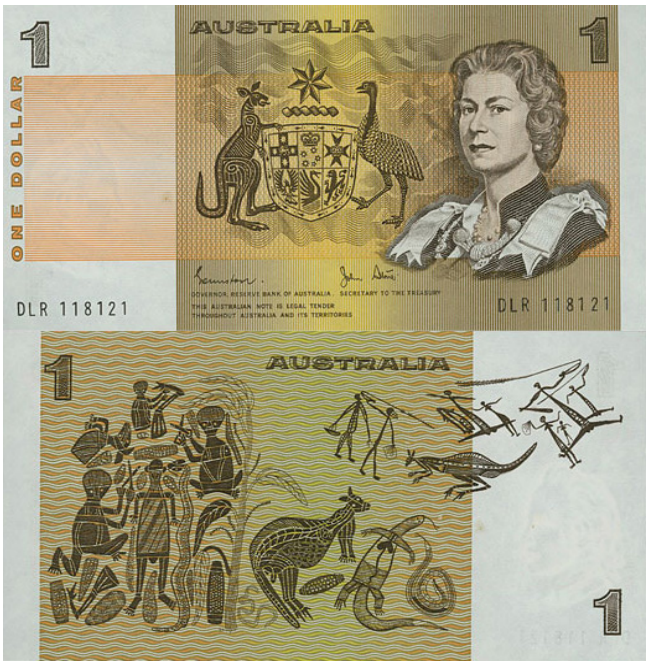
Science

- Forensics is a blend of a few different types of science, it uses biology, chemistry and physics. Consider some forensics, such as facial recognition or counterfeiting, and discuss how it uses different types of science to analyse it.
- What are some other types of science that help detectives solve crimes? Can you think of any? It might be computer science, geology, sociology, or engineering. How might those things help? Like tracing dirt from tracks to work out where they came from or creating computer programs that can detect facial recognition.
- As a class take the fingerprints of every student onto a posterboard with their names underneath. See how everyone has individual fingerprints. Not even identical twins have the same fingerprints because they aren't genetic! Biology tells us that some things get passed down from parent to child, like hair colour and eye colour, but things like fingerprints are formed from how you move and grow when your mom is pregnant with you.

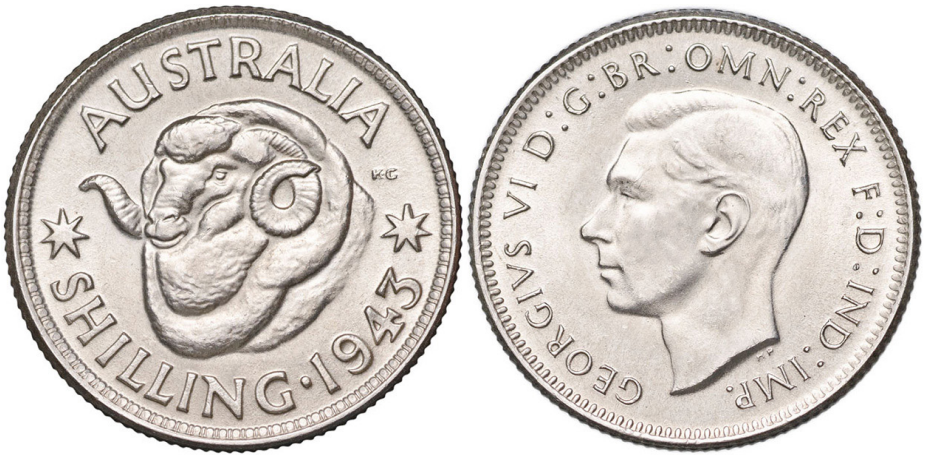
Activities

Cash Investigations

- Did you know that there used to be one dollar and two dollar cash notes? Does it feel silly and weird to use those instead of coins? Australia used to use paper money instead of plastic. And once upon a time Australia used to use old-timey money called things called 'sixpence' and 'shillings' that were the same in England! Have a discussion in a small group about how money can change over time and why it might change.



An Australian one dollar note.

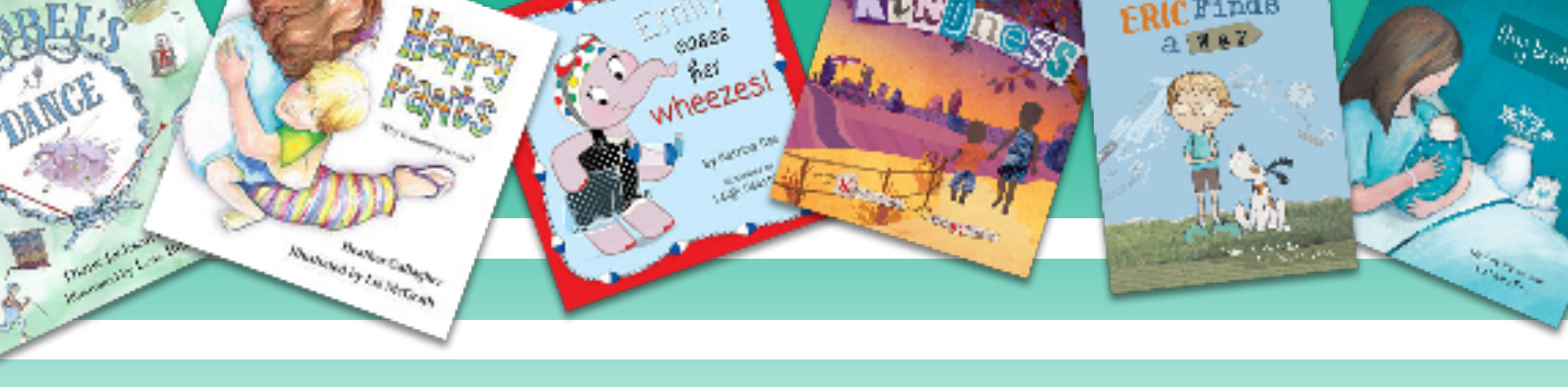


An Australian shilling from 1943

- See if you can get some paper cash, whether it's old Australian dollars, American dollars or another foreign curency that uses paper notes. Old paper notes were a little bit easier to counterfeit and that's why we switched to plastic notes. In notes that were paper it was easier to copy them, the process required was simpler so counterfeiting was a bigger issue in Australia before we changed our notes. There is also a range of markers that help us know that they are real. You can see these here. So if you could have access to a range of paper notes and plastic notes you can compare these notes and understand how the incidence of counterfeiting has been reduced in recent years. Try to feel the notes, look at the markers like a small clear window in old Australian notes and a big clear panel in newer ones, tilt to see shines and holograms in newer notes. If you're able you can also use UV to see different elements on the notes light up. Compare the plastic texture and the security markers in these plasic notes to the paper ones (whether older Australian or overseas currencies). In the story Riz notices that the counterfeit paper notes don't feel the same as the normal ones so in the story the children run their fingers along the many plastic markers on the different notes and see if they can see any differences or interesting features.
- Do some research on different currencies and what they do to prevent counterfeiting. Do they use plastic like Australia? Do they also use 'feel, look, tilt'? Do they use things we don't use, and should we start? Here's some interesting facts to start you off:
- The country with the least counterfeited currency is New Zealand (it has one note or coin per 1 million!). New Zealand also uses polymer (plastic) on their currency.
- Canada's currency counterfeiting fell dramatically (by 74%) when they switched to using plastic and new security measures like UV.
- The European union also struggles with the Euro often being counterfeited. In Europe they introduced security threads and portrait holograms to try and help. People are urged to check the new Europa notes when given them as when you feel a real note there should be some raised print on it. Then as you look at it a watermark, security thread and a see-through number should be there. Finally when you hold it up to the light in a tilted position the hologram, glossy stripe or number will shift in the light
- The currencies with the worst counterfeiting problems are the US dollar and the UK pound! The US market has problems with paper notes while the UK is dealing with coin minting. The United Kingdom introduced a new 1 pound coin in 2017. The new coin had 12 sides, one hologram and a 'secret high tech feature that prevents it from being copied', according to the Royal Mint. However, that hasn't stopped counterfeiters. In the US the $20 bill is the

most counterfeited banknote by counterfeiters who live there, but people counterfeiting from overseas are more likely to make fake $100 bills.

- *References: Recent Trends in Banknote Counterfeiting RBA Abstract, Recent Trends in Banknote Counterfeiting Report, How to Spot A Fake New Zealand Bank Note, Counterfeiters Perplexed By Canada's Plastic Money, Feel Look Tilt Method Europa Series European Central Bank, The Seven Most Counterfeited Currencies*



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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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