

BOOK STATS

Grade Level Equivalent: 3–6

Ages: 8+

Lexile Measure: 660L

Pages: 24

Genre: Mystery and Adventure

Subject/Theme: Deception and Trust, Adventure, Mystery

Common Core Standards	Reading	Writing	Listening & Speaking	Language
Grade 3	RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.4	W.3.3	SL.3.1, SL.3.4	L.3.4, L.3.5
Grade 4	RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.4.4	W.4.3	SL.4.1, SL.4.4	L.4.4, L.4.5
Grade 5	RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.3, RL.5.4	W.5.3	SL.5.1, SL.5.4	L.5.4, L.5.5

Teaching the Book

The Sword Thief continues the adventures of Amy and Dan Cahill as they fly to Japan in pursuit of the next Clue in their grandmother’s high-stakes puzzle. Discuss with students how the author uses characterization to develop the themes of deception and trust and how action-packed words are used to develop the mood of danger. Students will engage in activities ranging from researching samurais to writing a script for Reader’s Theater.

Theme Focus: Deception and Trust

Comprehension Focus: Analyze Characterization

Language Focus: Action-Packed Words

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Lerangis is the author of more than 160 books, which have sold almost five million copies and have been translated into 27 languages, including two books in the series *The 39 Clues* (Book #3: *The Sword Thief* and Book #7: *The Viper’s Nest*). Lerangis injects his own brand of suspense, humor, and colorful characters into many different writing genres including mystery, science fiction, teen romance, and serious historical fiction.

His novel *Smiler’s Bones*, based on the true story of a Polar Eskimo boy orphaned in New York City at the turn of the 20th century, was selected as a New York Public Library Best Books for Teens 2006, a Bank Street Best Book of 2006, and a Junior Library Guild pick.

A Harvard graduate with a degree in biochemistry, Peter became a Broadway musical theater actor after college. He has run a marathon and gone rock-climbing during an earthquake, but not on the same day. He lives in New York City with his wife and their two sons.

For more about Peter Lerangis, visit his website, <http://peterlerangis.com/>.

OVERVIEW

Book Summary

It doesn’t take long for Amy and Dan Cahill to begin questioning whom they can—and cannot—trust in Book Three of *The 39 Clues*. Before they can fly out of Venice to pursue the next Clue in Japan, they are tricked out of their boarding passes by their cousins Ian and Natalie Kabra. Moments later, their Uncle Alistair offers to take them to Japan on his private jet—and the adventure begins! But can the young Cahills trust their seemingly kind uncle?

Amy and Dan arrive in Japan and set out to find a Clue hidden by the fearsome, sixteenth-century Japanese warrior Toyotomi Hideyoshi—another famous Cahill relative. After evading a sneak attack by their cousins, the Holts, in a Tokyo subway tunnel, Amy and Dan barely survive an ambush by the deadly yakuza crime syndicate. But the greatest treachery of all awaits in an alliance with Ian and Natalie Kabra. Amy lets down her guard with Ian only to be trapped in a cave. Amy and Dan manage to escape by setting off an explosion; however, they fear that their Uncle Alistair has perished. By the end of the book, they learn that deception is the name of the game in the search for the 39 Clues!



Get Ready to Read

Pre-Reading Activities

Google Earth Build background about the Cahills' next adventure, by zooming students from Venice, Italy to Tokyo, Japan by way of Moscow. Then locate Seoul, Korea—the last destination in the book. If possible, use Google Earth on a whiteboard to trace the journey, noting the countries Amy and Dan fly over and adding the miles of the trip.

Listen to an Audio Excerpt Engage students' interest by playing a dramatic reading of the first pages of *The Sword Thief*. Find the MP3 recording under the book's title at: <http://bit.ly/WH8Klf>. Refer students to the summaries on this website, in case they did not read the first two books and need to catch up on the action!

Vocabulary

Action-Packed Words Like the other 39 Clues books, *The Sword Thief* is full of action-packed descriptions. To keep readers on the edge of their seats, the author uses words that evoke strong feelings of danger and excitement. Ask students to watch for the following words as they read the book. Encourage them to look for hints in the text to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words, check the dictionary definitions, if necessary, and then write the definitions on the vocabulary cards. Suggest that they record other action-packed words as they read.

Distribute copies of **Resource #1: Vocabulary Cards** on page 7 to students.

pandemonium (p. 11)	collide (p. 12)
assault (p. 13)	hurtle (p. 16)
violent (p. 60)	swerve (p. 72)
invasion (p. 114)	explosion (p. 143)



BIG QUESTION

Critical Thinking Ask students to think about this question as they read and be ready to answer it when they have finished the book. Write the question on chart paper or have students record it in their reading journals.

Can Amy and Dan trust any of their relatives? Can they trust each other?

As You Read

Reading the Book

Modeled Reading After playing the audio excerpt of the book or reading several pages aloud yourself, prompt students to ask and answer questions about the book. For example: How do Amy and Dan act like typical brothers and sisters? What is Nellie like? Why do you think Amy and Dan fell for the Kabras' trick?

Independent Reading Assign students to read *The Sword Thief* independently. Encourage them to partner with another student to share questions and reactions to the book.

STORIA ENRICHMENTS

This Storia e-book has the following enrichments to enhance students' comprehension of the book.

- Who Said It?
- Do You Know?
- Word Twister (3)
- Collectible Cards
- Word Scramble (2)

Comprehension Focus

Analyze Characterization Introduce students to the author’s craft of characterization in *The Sword Thief*. Explain that the author’s goal is to help you as a reader empathize with the main characters in the book so that you feel that you are along for the adventure. By feeling and sensing what is happening to the characters, you care about them and want to keep reading. There are several ways that an author builds character. The first is through physical descriptions of a character that help you see the character in your mind. The second is through the character’s dialogue and thoughts that let you see inside the character’s mind and personality. A third is the character’s actions and gestures that can sometimes speak louder than words, especially when a character is being deceptive.

Use the graphic organizer on **Resource #2: Analyze Characterization** to model for students how to look for hints about character in the book. Project the page on a whiteboard or pass out copies to students.

Model: First, I’m going to think about how the author draws a picture of Dan Cahill through his descriptions and dialogue. What are Dan’s physical characteristics? Well, I know he is Amy’s younger brother. And on page 1, Amy calls him a “scrawny, delusional eleven-year-old” who thinks he’s a ninja. Under physical characteristics, I’ll write eleven-year-old and scrawny. But later in the book, I also find out that Dan is strong and fast moving . . . so I’ll write that under physical characteristics, too.

Guide students to fill in the rest of Dan’s traits or fill in the traits for another character from the book. Encourage students to share their answers and discuss them.

After You Read

Questions to Discuss

Lead students in a discussion of these focus story elements.

1. Deception and Trust Do you think Ian Kabra ever had any affectionate feelings for Amy? Or was

he always deceiving her? Support your answer with evidence from the text. (*Answers will vary.*)

2. Analyze Character Why do you think Uncle Alistair helped Amy and Dan but then ditched them at the end? What do you know about him that supports your answer? (*He wanted to use Amy and Dan to help him find the next Clue in Japan and Korea. But once he learned what he wanted to know, he took off by himself. Evidence: He didn’t tell Amy and Dan that he survived the explosion.*)

3. Action-Packed Words Use the word **hurtle** to describe a piece of action in the story. (*Sample answer: Amy, Dan, and Alistair hurtled out of the tunnel as fast as they could.*)

Questions to Share

Encourage students to share their responses with a partner or small group.

1. Text to Self Who do you think has made the cleverest discoveries about the Clues—Amy or Dan? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

2. Text to World What parts of the book remind you of things that are going on in the world today? Where are there groups of bad people like the yakuza operating today?

WORDS TO KNOW

Action-Packed Words

Ask students to refer to the definitions they wrote on their vocabulary cards to answer each question below. The questions require students to apply the meaning of the words to their own experiences.

1. Think of a time that you witnessed **pandemonium**.
2. What is an example of **violent** weather?
3. Why might a driver **swerve** a car?
4. What will happen if two bicycle riders **collide**?
5. Use the word **explosion** to describe something beautiful or positive.

3. Text to Text Compare the adventures of Amy and Dan in Book Three with their adventures in Books One and Two. Which book do you think has the most exciting action?

Extension Activities

Reading/Writing Connection

Reader's Theater Script Challenge students to choose a favorite scene from the book to rewrite as a Reader's Theater script. Guide students to work on the dramatization with partners or with a small group. Explain that a scene containing a lot of dialogue is a good choice; however, remind students that they can use a narrator to describe action and thoughts as well as add sound effects for dramatic interest. Ask students to present their Reader's Theater to the rest of the class. Visit <http://bit.ly/T9gcYD> for resources from the

National Council of Teachers of English. Visit this site <http://bit.ly/SoFALD> for a good example of a Reader's Theater script.

Don't forget the



BIG QUESTION

Critical Thinking Give each student an opportunity to answer the big question. Encourage students to support their answers with details and evidence from the text. Remind them that there is no one right answer.

Can Amy and Dan trust any of their relatives? Can they trust each other?

Content Area Connections

Math GPS Coordinates Provide students the fun challenge of learning to "geocode" GPS coordinates, just like the characters do in *The 39 Clues*. "Geocoding" means converting a street address into latitude and longitude, which is then entered into a GPS device. If possible, make a GPS device available for students. Guide students to convert an address into latitude and longitude by visiting <http://bit.ly/SgPaSA>.

Science The Most Precious Metal Gold plays an important role in *The Sword Thief*. It is introduced with its symbol from alchemy. Challenge interested students to learn more about the scientific facts of gold, including its properties that make it such a precious metal. Encourage students to report back to the class with their findings including illustrations or photographs.

History The Greatest Warrior Amy and Dan find out about yet another Cahill ancestor, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, one of the greatest warriors in the history of Japan. Encourage students to research "the bald rat" and record several facts about him to report to the class; and, if possible, share the

historical painting of him. Guide them to visit the samurai archives at <http://bit.ly/Te941p> or other research sites.

Language Arts Journal Entry Trust and deception are important themes of *The Sword Thief*. Encourage students to write a private journal entry about their own experiences with trust and deception. Use this statement by Uncle Alistair as a springboard for their writing: "Trust is a fragile thing—difficult to build, easy to break," (p. 43).

BIG ACTIVITY

The Sword Thief—Casting Call Challenge students to use their own ideas to cast the characters in a play about *The Sword Thief*. Who do they think would have the right physical looks and the right acting personality to play the roles of Amy and Dan Cahill, Nellie Gomez, Ian and Natalie Kabra, and other characters from the books? Encourage students to choose actors whom they have seen on television or in the movies . . . or, if they want, real kids from their school or community.

Name: _____ Date: _____

BIG ACTIVITY: *The Sword Thief*—Casting Call

You are in charge of casting the actors in a play version of *The Sword Thief*. Cast members of your class for each of the major roles listed below. Then add a short description of each character.

THE CAST

Character	Played by	Character Description
Amy Cahill	_____	_____ _____
Dan Cahill	_____	_____ _____
Nellie Gomez	_____	_____ _____
Irina Spasky	_____	_____ _____
Ian Kabra	_____	_____ _____
Natalie Kabra	_____	_____ _____
Alistair Oh	_____	_____ _____

READ MORE AND LEARN MORE

Use these books and other resources to expand your students' study of the book or theme.

Author and Series Connections



The 39 Clues #6: In Too Deep

Jude Watson

Ages: 8–12

Lexile Level: 550L

Guided Reading Level: U

Grades: 3–6

Pages: 208

Nothing is as it seems for siblings Amy and Dan Cahill, who must battle bitter relatives for the 39 Clues. In this book, the international scavenger hunt includes a trek to Australia, where answers lead to more questions and news that the deaths of Amy and Dan's parents may not have been accidental. If experience has taught Amy and Dan anything, it's that they should trust no one! But with stakes this high, compromises may have to be made. **Available as a Storia e-book**



The 39 Clues #7: The Viper's Nest

Peter Lerangis

Ages: 8–12

Lexile Level: 590L

Guided Reading Level: U

Grades: 3–6

Pages: 192

Trust no one. That's what orphans Amy and Dan Cahill must remember as they vie against their scheming relatives for the 39 Clues. Now in Indonesia, Amy and Dan face even greater challenges as they are hunted by police, trapped on an island with a secretive stranger, and caught in a tropical storm. Can the siblings forge ahead? Or will the pressure be too much? **Available as a Storia e-book**

Theme Connections



Fish

Gregory Mone

Ages: 9–13

Lexile Level: 810L

Grades: 4–7

Pages: 256

Fish, a 12-year-old boy from a poor farming family, takes a job as a courier for his uncle—and is immediately captured by pirates who want the package he's carrying! Fish soon learns that the package contains the key to locating a legendary treasure. As he works to earn the trust of the kind-hearted pirate captain, Fish becomes aware of a mutiny headed by a nasty pirate named Scab. Now it's up to Fish to thwart Scab's dastardly plan—and find the fortune! **Available as a Storia e-book**



The Spaghetti Detectives

Andreas Steinhofel

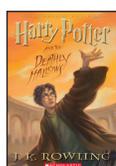
Ages: 9–11

Lexile Level: 740L

Grades: 4–6

Pages: 176

Rico thinks a lot, but sometimes he forgets things like which way is left or right. One day, Rico notices a single piece of spaghetti on the sidewalk. Later, he meets Oscar—a super smart prodigy—and they become friends. But suddenly Oscar disappears and Rico hears that he's been kidnapped. All the crazy things Rico has noticed—like the spaghetti—become clues to find Oscar. **Available as an enriched Storia e-book**



Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

J. K. Rowling

Ages: 8–13

Lexile Level: 980L

Guided Reading Level: Z

Grades: 3–7

Pages: 615

Eleven-year-old Harry Potter is whisked away to the mystical Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry to learn magical skills, from potions to spells to flying on broomsticks. However, there is an evil power rising, one that threatened the entire world when Harry was only a baby. As Harry learns the truth about his family, his childhood, and his mysterious lightning-bolt-shaped scar, he finds unforgettable friendship and the courage to face the darkest force to ever menace the world.

Available as a Storia e-book



Infinity Ring #1: A Mutiny in Time

James Dashner

Ages: 8–12

Lexile Level: 800

Grades: 3–6

Pages: 192

In this series opener, best friends Dak Smyth and Sera Froste discover a device called the Infinity Ring. Joining a secret society known as the Historians, they discover that history is broken—and only they can set it right. Their first mission is to repair the Great Breaks in history, starting with Christopher Columbus, who is about to be thrown overboard by a mutinous crew. His death would change history in ways that are almost inconceivable. **Available as a Storia e-book**



Storm Runners

Roland Smith

Ages: 9–12

Lexile Level: 700

Grades: 4–7

Pages: 160

Chase and his dad are “storm runners,” traveling across the country chasing hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. When disaster strikes, Chase's dad is ready to lend a hand. It's an exciting life for Chase; but in the aftermath of the hurricane of the century, Chase realizes his dad isn't the hero he makes himself out to be. Now it's up to Chase to find a way to do the right thing! **Available as a Storia e-book**

Go to <http://teacher.scholastic.com/reading-resources/> to find PDF versions of the Storia teacher guides and links to purchase the related books.

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Resource #2: Analyze Characterization

Name: _____ Date: _____

Choose a character from *The Sword Thief*. Then use the organizer below to analyze his or her traits.

Character's Name: _____

Physical Characteristics	
Dialogue and Thoughts	
Actions and Gestures	