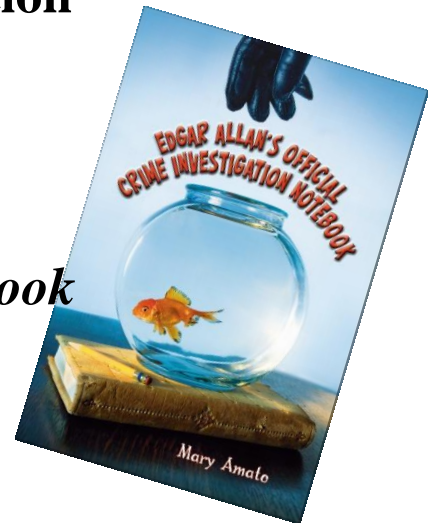


Readers Theater Adaptation
of
Edgar Allan's Official
Crime Investigation Notebook
by Mary Amato



This adaptation can be used by schools and libraries for performances. If your school performs it, please let the author know at info@maryamato.com or via twitter at @maryamato. Thanks to Montclair Elementary School (FL) students for working on this script. If you produce it and have suggestions for additions and changes, let the author know!

Characters

Narrator
Edgar
Patrick
Ms. Hershel
Mr. Crew
Taz
Destiny
Maia
Gabriela
Kip
Students

SCENE I

NARRATOR: At Wordsworth Elementary School, just before the day began, someone stole the fish from the tank in MS. HERSHEL's classroom and left a message on the board. Now the students are gathered around the message, everyone talking at once.

STUDENTS *(All talking to one another about who might have stolen the fish.)*

MS. HERSCHEL: *(Sets down her coffee cup while sitting on edge of desk and looks at students over the rims of dark-framed glasses.)* Please be quiet and take your seats. We won't get anywhere with all this noise.

EDGAR: *(Sits and looks around at his classmates.)*

KIP: *(Leg is jiggling against his desk.)*

TAZ: *(Pretends to swim to his seat in the last row while making fish faces.)*

MS. HERSCHEL: TAZ, do you think this is funny?

MAIA: I don't think it's funny. I gave Slurpy to the whole class as a gift. Whoever stole that cute little fish was mean. *(Toss hair and glares at TAZ.)*

TAZ: Stop staring at me. What do you think? I came in here and ate it for breakfast? *(Laughs and make a slurping sound.)*

DESTINY: What if Slurpy is dead?!

PATRICK: *(Raises his hand and sits up straight.)* I think Slurpy was stolen, not murdered, because of what the note says. The thief left clues in it.

MS. HERSCHEL: Interesting, PATRICK. Would you like to read the note aloud?

PATRICK: *(Walks to the board to read the note.)*

The Thief

The thief comes

On little cat feet

Sits looking

At the goldfish

Then takes it carefully

And moves on.

(Points at note title)

See the title? Thief. Not murderer! And the thief takes the fish carefully.

KIP: I got it. A cat did it!

GABRIELA: *(Rolls her eyes).* The thief is like a cat, meaning sneaky.

MS. HERSCHEL: I think you're right about the thief being sneaky, Gabriela. But let's not jump to conclusions about who did it without more clues.

EDGAR: *(Opens notebook and begins writing, reading aloud in a whisper to himself. The other students don't pay attention to this.)*

Tuesday, October 2

My whole body is shivering. A criminal has been in this very room where I'm now sitting. All my life I've been waiting for something like this to happen. I'll record clues in this notebook. I will catch this thief before anyone else does!

PATRICK: *(Still standing at the front, pulls a camera out of his pocket.)* MS. HERSCHEL, may I take a picture of the evidence?

MS. HERSCHEL: Great idea PATRICK.

PATRICK: *(Goes back to his seat after he takes a picture and whispers to EDGAR).* What a crime solver needs is a theory about why someone would commit the crime.

EDGAR: *(Writes in notebook, whispering).*

Help I need a theory! Why? Why? Why steal a goldfish that bothered no one and gave joy to the happy students at Wordsworth Elementary School? All I know is there are criminals out there who do bad things and innocent fish pay the price.

BELL RINGER: *(Rings the bell)*

END OF SCENE I

Scene II

- NARRATOR:** Time for Language Arts class with Mr. Crew.
- STUDENTS:** *(Walk around and pretend to enter Mr. Crew's room.)*
- PATRICK:** *(walks faster than anyone and gets in first. He runs up to teacher, showing him the thief's message on the viewing screen of his camera.)*
- Look at this! A thief stole the fish from Ms. Hershel's room and left a message. I'm going to make observations and do interviews with suspects. I'm going to solve the crime.
- MR. CREW:** This is fascinating PATRICK! This message is like a poem. The thief is using the image of a cat to describe himself or herself. That's called a metaphor. I was going to start our unit on poetry today, and now I can use this as a springboard. We can start with metaphor.
- DESTINY:** A metaphor is when you use one thing to describe another, like the thief is a cat.
- GABRIELA:** Or happiness is a flower.
- MR. CREW:** Yes. So, here's what we're going to do. We're each going to think of a subject that we want to write about, then come up with a metaphor to use, like the thief is a cat, and write a poem.
- EDGAR:** *(The moment the room grows quiet, EDGAR walks up to MR. CREW's desk and whispers)* May I be excused? I need to search the school.
- MR. CREW:** *(whispers)* EDGAR, it's time to sit and think.
- EDGAR:** *(whispers)* But I have reason to believe the thief might strike again.
- MR. CREW:** I see. But if I let you go, then I'd have to agree to let everyone go. And if everyone went, we wouldn't get any poetry writing done.
- EDGAR:** I can live with that.
- MR. CREW:** Tell you what. Write a poem. Maybe if we have a minute or two left at the end, and if you have a specific place you'd like to search, I'll consider it.

EDGAR: *(Walks back to his seat.)*

MR. CREW: Would anyone like to share a poem before we get dismissed for lunch?

MAIA & GABRIELA: *(raise their hands)*

MR. CREW: Great! You can read the poem that you wrote together.

MAIA & GABRIELA:

Goldfish

**Underneath dark water
A fish is dancing light
When the light goes out
The day becomes night.**

MR. CREW: That was terrific girls! Light is a metaphor for a goldfish! Class, what do you think they mean by “when the light goes out the day becomes night?”

DESTINY: They’re saying it’s sad when the fish disappears.

MR. CREW: Yes! Beautiful! Who wants to go next?

KIP: *(raises his hand and jumps up and down in his seat).* I wrote one about my skateboard.

My Skateboard

**My board is a bird
And I ride on its back.
We fly out of half pipes
And get lots of air.
When I do a 360
And grab the nose,
Then my bird
Is my flying chair.**

MR. CREW: Fantastic! Love it! Two metaphors---your board is a bird and a chair! Bravo! Who’s next?

TAZ: Mine is about my dog *(smile)*

Dog Breath

A monster lives inside my dog

**Its smell is worse than death
It comes out when he kisses me
Its name is Big Bad Dog Breath.**

STUDENTS: *(Laugh)*

MR. CREW: *(Gives TAZ a standing ovation)*

EDGAR: *(Writes and whispers):*
I didn't get anything done in this class. No good observations.
No poem. I am a failure. I am giving up.

BELL RINGER: *(Ring bell.)*

END OF SCENE II

Scene III

NARRATOR: At recess, everyone is still talking about the case.

STUDENTS: *(In small groups, talking.)*

PATRICK: EDGAR, I'm going to crack this case.

EDGAR: We'll see about that.

PATRICK: I'm documenting some important evidence. I'm taking photos of this shoe print and then I'm going to interview some suspects. *(PATRICK is busy taking pictures of a shoe print in the mud. The girls gather around him to see.)*

EDGAR: *(Walks off mumbling)* I shall do an official interview right now and come up with some important conclusions of my own!

(EDGAR sees TAZ and takes out his notebook to interview him.)

EDGAR: Hi TAZ, I have a question for you.

TAZ: My mom said I shouldn't talk to strangers.

EDGAR: I'm not a stranger.

TAZ: You're stranger than you think! (*TAZ laughs.*)

EDGAR: When exactly did you arrive at school today?

TAZ: I got here at exactly the time I got here.

EDGAR: Which was when?

TAZ: When I got here. (*TAZ laughs.*)

EDGAR: That's not really an answer.

TAZ: It was a joke, little mystery dude.

EDGAR: Oh. Please just call me mystery dude.

TAZ: Okay little mystery dude.

EDGAR: I have another question. Do you or do you not like fish?

TAZ: Only on a bun with tartar sauce. (*TAZ saunters off laughing.*)

NARRATOR: As EDGAR finishes writing down notes from his interview with TAZ, he notices PATRICK walking back inside.

EDGAR: Where are you going?

PATRICK: To the office. I have a theory. Do you?

EDGAR: Yes, I do. A Big Theory.

PATRICK: What is the next phase of your investigation? Do you even have one?

EDGAR: Yes, I do.

PATRICK: I have an interview to do.

EDGAR: I have an interview to do, too.

PATRICK: Interview with who?

NARRATOR: Both boys are walking down the hall. They pass Ms. Hershel's room. EDGAR stops and sticks his head in the door.

EDGAR: MS. HERSCHEL, may I speak with you. (*He glances back at PATRICK*). In private?

MS. HERSCHEL: Only for a minute EDGAR.

EDGAR: (*Makes a face at PATRICK as PATRICK walks off. EDGAR takes out his notebook.*)
Ma'am, in your exact words, when exactly was Slurpy stolen?

MS. HERSCHEL: EDGAR, I appreciate how seriously you're taking this, but I already went over the story.

EDGAR: I need to establish the exact time of the crime, ma'am. What time did you arrive at work?

MS. HERSCHEL: You can call me MS. HERSCHEL, EDGAR. Like I said, the fish was here when I arrived at 7:45. At 8:20, I went to get coffee. When I came back at 8:55, it was gone.

EDGAR: How do you think the thief got in?

MS. HERSCHEL: Well, I left my door unlocked.

EDGAR: I see. Does the principal know that you are careless about locking up and that you are drinking coffee on the job, ma'am?

MS. HERSCHEL: Go to class, EDGAR.

EDGAR: (*stops to write*): For a cup of coffee, MS. HERSCHEL will risk the life of a helpless fish.

NARRATOR: (*Rings Bell*) Will Edgar discover the identity of the thief? Will Patrick or another student? Will the thief strike again? Will the students write more poems? Read Edgar Allan's Official Crime Investigation Notebook by Mary Amato to find out.

-----**THE END**-----