FAMILY CASE FILES · BOOK 5

THE SILENT BELL

Teacher & Homeschool Guide

Six detective lessons for ages 10 and up, built on the six cases in the book.

- A lesson plan for every case
- Discussion questions and writing prompts
- Student notes sheet (copy one per student)
- Class tracker
- Where to find every answer in the book

FREE · BY AMIRA FINN

You need one copy of *Family Case Files: The Silent Bell* (Book 5). This guide may be copied freely for home, classroom and club use. amirafinn.com

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Each case becomes one lesson of two 40-minute sessions (three where a case is marked 3 sessions), about 13 sessions in all. Students work in groups of four; one book per group is best.

You need	Details
The book	One copy for the teacher; one per group of four is best.
Copies	The book allows you to photocopy p. 4, the exhibit pages, the scratch pads, the exam (pp. 107–108) and the membership card, for home and one classroom (copyright page). Copy every page of this guide freely.
Supplies	Pencils, a ruler (Case 4), a clock with hands if you have one, a timer.
Teacher answers	All answers are in the book: Grown-ups cheat sheet, 40-minute lesson and "where kids get stuck" (p. 112), case solutions (pp. 114–125), Quick Case answers (p. 126), exam answers (p. 127). (page list on the last page).

Three ways to play. Rookie (☆, ages 10–11): the ☆ questions and the culprit. Standard: add the Standard exhibit and "Prove it." Master (teens): add Master, TEEN GAMBIT and SECOND LIAR boxes.

Group roles (groups of four). Map Reader handles maps and measuring. Timekeeper writes every time and date. Code Breaker fills in the code letters. Note Taker writes the proof. Rotate roles each session.

The lesson rhythm. Session 1: read the case opener aloud (5 min); groups work the first exhibits (25 min); each group shares one fact they are sure of (10 min). **Session 2:** finish the exhibits (20 min); complete the suspect board and code word (10 min); each group accuses with ONE piece of proof while the class tries to knock it down (10 min). Read the solution together only after every group has accused, or open the next session with it. **Session 3 (cases marked 3 sessions):** recap sure facts (5 min), final exhibits (20 min), accusations (10 min), read the solution (5 min).

One rule for every lesson: evidence before opinions. A guess only counts when a student can point to the page that proves it.

Standards links (Common Core): RI.5.1 / RI.6.1 cite text evidence · W.5.1 / W.6.1 argument writing · SL.5.1 / SL.6.1 discussion · 4.OA.C.5 patterns · 4.OA.B.4 / 6.NS.B.4 multiples · 5.NF.B.5 scaling · 6.RP.A.1 ratios.

Differentiation and extras. Support: the Rookie route, with the hint page facing each Accuse page, plus the stuck-points on p. 112 read aloud. Stretch: the Master route, then students write a mini-case of their own. Early finishers and warm-ups: Quick Cases (5-minute warm-ups). Assessment: the Detective Exam (pp. 107–108) after the final case.

LESSON PLANS

"During" questions are safe to ask while students work. "After" questions give away the answer: save them for after the solution.

CASE 01

The Skipped Midnight

STARTS P. 5 · 2 SESSIONS · SKILLS: COUNTING CHIMES, NUMBER PATTERNS

Objective: Students count notes and strikes to find exactly when the bell stopped.

Hook (5 min): Clap a pattern: 1 clap at quarter past, 2 at half past, 3 at quarter to. Ask: "How many by the hour?"

During (safe while solving):

- Count the notes first, then the strikes. What time does each sound mean?
- Which chime was missing?
- Who could get into the tower without a card?

After the solution (spoilers):

- A misspelled banner turned out to be a clue. How?
- Why do detectives write down every small mistake?

Writing prompt: Write a chiming schedule for the tower for one hour, showing notes and strikes.

CASE 02

The Two-Camera Alibi

STARTS P. 23 · 2 SESSIONS · SKILLS: COMMON MULTIPLES, MATCHING TIMED STILL FRAMES

Objective: Students list two cameras' still times side by side to find when both caught the same moment.

Hook (5 min): Ask: "One light blinks every 6 seconds, another every 4. When do they blink together?"

During (safe while solving):

- List both cameras' times side by side. When do they match?
- Is there a gap long enough for someone to slip away?
- Which doors could someone use, and which ones log who opens them?

After the solution (spoilers):

- Two cameras seemed to give a perfect alibi. What was wrong with it?
- How long would the trip there and back take?

Writing prompt: Write a memo to the council recommending one change to the cameras, with your reason.

CASE 03

The Hands That Wave

STARTS P. 39 · 2 SESSIONS · SKILLS: THE CLOCK-HAND CODE, LOGIC

Objective: Students read letters from clock-hand positions using the chart on p. 40.

Hook (5 min): Draw a clock face. Put the hands at two positions and ask students to invent a letter for each.

During (safe while solving):

- Use both hands, in any order. What letter does each clock show?
- What word do the clocks spell?
- Whose code readers could understand this message?

After the solution (spoilers):

- Gus is a shopkeeper the crew knows. How should detectives treat a suspect they like?
- What had been open for 31 years?

Writing prompt: Write a short message in clock-hand code for a partner to decode.

CASE 04

The Picture-Perfect Fake

STARTS P. 57 · 2 SESSIONS · SKILLS: SCALING AND ENLARGEMENT, MEASURING WITH A RULER

Objective: Students divide a big size by a small size to test whether an enlargement is true to scale.

Hook (5 min): Show a small photo and an enlarged copy. Ask: "If the photo is twice as wide, should it be twice as tall?"

During (safe while solving):

- Measure both pictures. Big size ÷ small size: what is the scale?
- Does every part grow by the same amount?
- Huxley says he shot it Tuesday. What does Jasper's lab envelope (p. 61) say?

After the solution (spoilers):

- How can a copy look right and still be fake?
- Where else does scale matter in real life?

Writing prompt: Write a five-step guide for checking whether a contest photo is really someone else's picture enlarged.

CASE 05

The Clock That Held Its Breath

STARTS P. 73 · 2 SESSIONS · SKILLS: GEAR TEETH RATIOS

Objective: Students use teeth ÷ teeth to test whether the gear really slipped and when the clock stopped.

Hook (5 min): Show two gears (or drawings). Ask: "If a 20-tooth gear turns once, how many turns does a 10-tooth gear make?"

During (safe while solving):

- Teeth ÷ teeth: how many turns does each gear make?
- Do the gears explain the time the hands show?
- Whose door card opened the tower that night?

After the solution (spoilers):

- Sadie had a family reason. How should the crew respond to someone who did wrong for a reason they care about?
- Did Sadie find the watch? What does that tell you about Case 6?

Writing prompt: Write Sadie's letter to her grandmother about the watch.

CASE 06

The Last Chime

STARTS P. 91 · 3 SESSIONS · SKILLS: SOUND LOGS, LOGIC AND CODES, EVERY EARLIER SKILL

Before you start: Students need the bell-night timeline (p. 4). Keep pages 4 and 40 open.

Objective: Students fill the bell-night timeline and use a sound log and a crew sheet to find who hid Kestrel.

Hook (5 min): Count heads as students leave and re-enter the room for a fire drill. Ask: "How would you know if one extra person slipped out with the group?"

During (safe while solving):

- Fill every slot on the bell-night timeline. What happened at 12:04?
- Compare the crew sheet's in and out counts.
- Match the 12:02 rattle to a van.

After the solution (spoilers):

- Kestrel is still free at the end. What do you predict happens next?
- Which clue from an earlier case mattered most here?

Writing prompt: Write the police bulletin for Kestrel, using only facts proved in the book.

DETECTIVE NOTES

Detective name: _____ Case: _____ Date: _____

Exhibit	One fact I am SURE of (with page number)	Code letter
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Code word: ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

Suspect	Why they COULD have done it	Why they COULDN'T (proof + page)

My accusation: _____ did it.

My best proof (page ___):

_____

Something I thought at first that turned out WRONG:

_____

What the evidence does NOT prove:

_____

CLASS TRACKER

Mark ✓ when a group cracks the code word with no hint, or H with a hint. Use the Bell-night timeline slots column for the book's running mystery.

Group / student	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Case 5	Case 6	Bell-night timeline slots	Quick Cases (of 12)	Exam (of 10)

Ranks: Exam ranks are on p. 127; students record their rank on the Detective License. The book suggests one exam question as a lesson exit ticket.

WHERE TO FIND THE ANSWERS

Every answer is in the book, with the full reasoning, so this guide points you to the right page instead of repeating it. Each solution page gives the culprit, the code word, the Master answers and "what the evidence does not prove."

Case	Title	Solution in the book
01	The Skipped Midnight	p. 114
02	The Two-Camera Alibi	p. 116
03	The Hands That Wave	p. 118
04	The Picture-Perfect Fake	p. 120
05	The Clock That Held Its Breath	p. 122
06	The Last Chime	p. 124

Everything else:

- The bell-night timeline: Case 6 solution, p. 124
- Quick Case answers: p. 126
- Exam answers: p. 127
- Where kids get stuck: p. 112

Tip: read each solution page yourself before the lesson, so you can nudge groups without giving the answer away.

Family Case Files © 2026 Amira Finn. Free to copy for home, classroom and club use. amirafinn.com