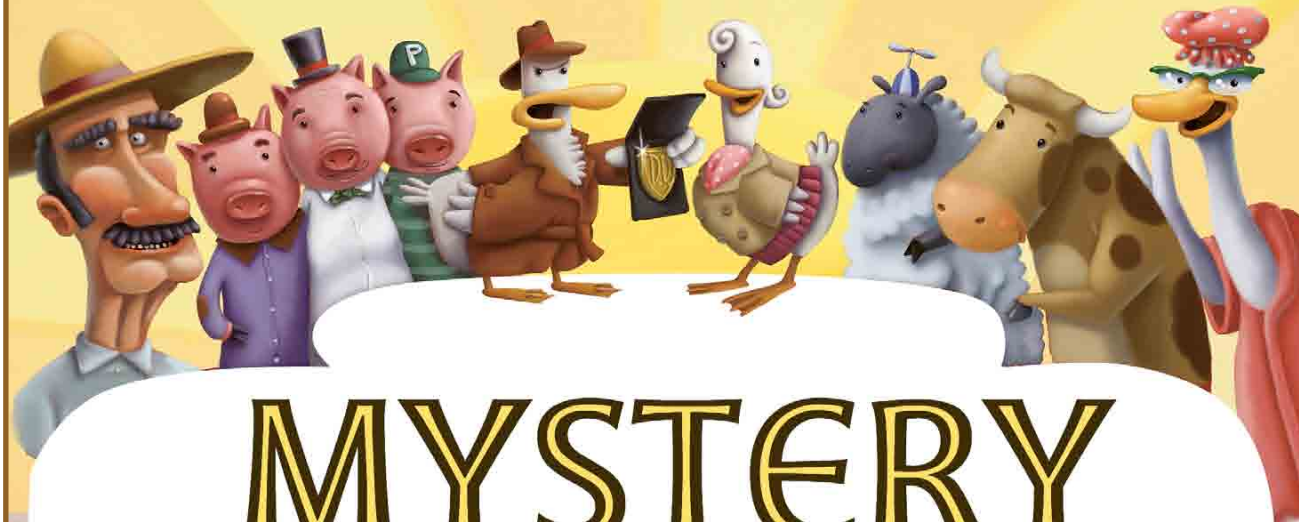


Highlights™



MYSTERY



Table of Contents

LEXILE® MEASURE

3	Ducktective Max and the Missing Farm Animals	410L
5	The Private I's and the Case of the Mixed-Up Message	280L
7	The Mystery of Pig's Missing Leaves ..	420L



Ducktective Max and the Missing Farm Animals

By Donna M. Boock Art by Pete Whitehead

The call came into Headquarters just after I'd quacked—er, I mean, *cracked*—the case of the stolen golden goose eggs.

I answered the phone: "Ducktective Max Quacks. What's the mystery?"

"My animals are all gone!" Old MacDonald yelled.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"My cow is missing, my three pigs aren't present, and my sheep is lost!" he said.

"We're on our way." I hung up the phone and jotted in my notebook:

Old MacDonald's cow, sheep, three pigs—gone!

Find them!

Then I explained the situation to Heather Feather, my friend and assistant ducktective.

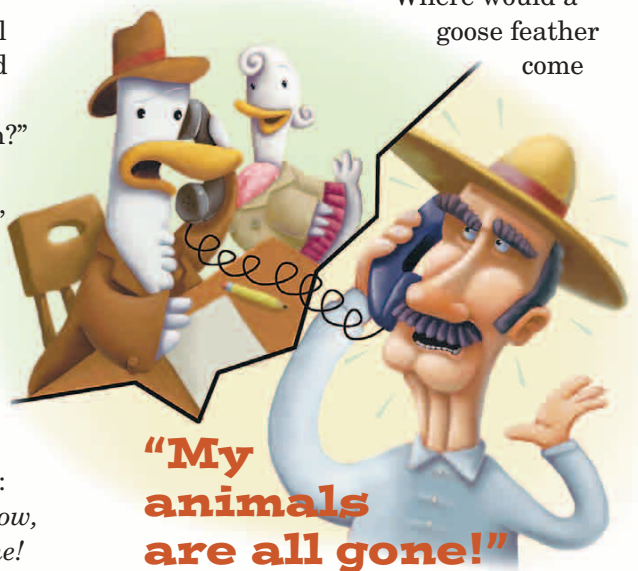
"Let's go!" she said.

We went to the pigpen first. We didn't hear an *oink* here or an *oink* there. We didn't hear an *oink-oink* anywhere.

"Maybe they flew south for the winter, Max," suggested Heather, picking up a feather from the ground.

"Since when have pigs grown wings?" I asked. "This looks like a goose feather, and goose feathers don't belong in pigpens. Our first clue!" I pulled out my notebook and made some notes.

"Where would a goose feather come



from? Old MacDonald doesn't have any geese," said Heather.

I thought for a moment. "But Mother Goose has plenty of feathers! Let's check her out."

"Good thinking. What's our plan when we get there?" Heather asked.

"Let's just wing it." I took the feather, and we flew south toward Mother Goose's nest.

"Mother Goose," I called when we arrived.

"Yes," she answered, poking her bill out of her nest. "Who's there?"

"Ducktective Max," I answered, flashing my badge. That's my favorite part of the job. "And my assistant, Heather."

"We're looking for Old MacDonald's missing animals," Heather added.

"How can I help?" Mother Goose asked.

"We found a feather in the pigpen. Is it yours?" I asked.

"Goodness, no! I haven't visited that farm in ages. I'd have to go the long way, with all that construction on London Bridge."

Maybe Mother Goose was innocent after all. One thing still bothered me. I reached into my trench coat. "Then where did this goose feather come from?"

"Goose feather?" Mother Goose laughed. "Max, that's no goose feather. It's one of your tail feathers!" She pointed to a bald spot.

I blushed and stuck my feather in my pocket.

"Thanks for your time," I said, flashing my badge again.

We were on our way back to Headquarters when we saw Little Boy Blue sleeping by a haystack.

"That's it!" Heather cried,

her tiny black eyes lighting up.

"What?" I asked.

"Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn. The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn!"

"You're right!" I followed her lead and landed in the field.

Heather turned to Blue and shouted, "Blue, wake up! We need your help!" She told him what to do.

Da-da-da-daaaah! went his horn. And the sheep showed up from the meadow.

"Play it again, Blue," she said.

Da-da-da-daaaah! he played.

And the cow came out of the corn!

"One more time," she said.

Da-da-da-daaaah! But no pigs popped out.

"Any idea where the pigs are?" I asked.

"Sorry, pigs aren't my thing,"

Blue answered.

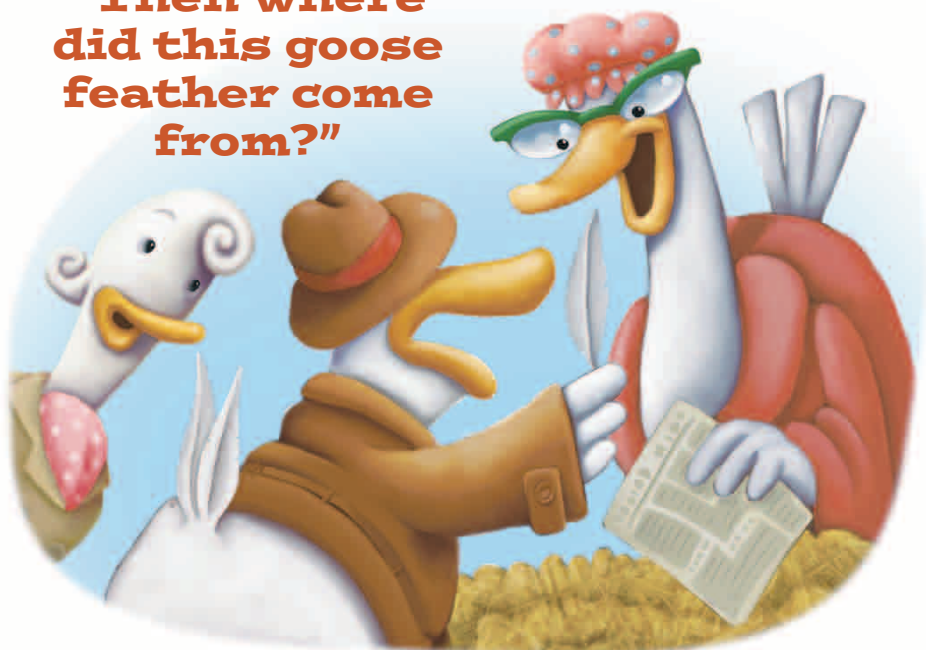
"Thanks for your help," I said.

"What's next, Max?" Heather asked.

"Mother Goose Land may still be our answer. Are there any stories about pigs?" I asked.

She held up a webbed foot.

"Then where did this goose feather come from?"



"Wolf, what have you done with the pigs?"



"This little piggy went to market. . . ."

"You only have three webbed toes. You'll need two more for that rhyme. How many pigs did Old MacDonald say he had?" I flipped through my notebook. "Here it is. He had three pigs."

"The Three Pigs—let's go see the Big Bad Wolf!" she said. So we did.

When we arrived at Wolf's place, we huffed, and we puffed, and we blew the door in. I flashed my badge. "Wolf, what have you done with the pigs?" I asked.

"Nothing," growled the wolf.

"Hogwash. We're taking you to the station for questioning," I said.

On the way, we saw Jack's Construction School. "That's the house that Jack built," I said, pointing to the tall building.

"Max, do you hear that? It sounds like pigs squealing," Heather said.

We went in to check it out. "Welcome to Construction 101: How to Build a Stronger House," Jack said. The three pigs were taking notes in the first row.

"I *told* you I didn't do anything," the wolf said.

"Maybe you're not such a big bad wolf after all," Heather said.

"It seems we've solved another rhyme—er, I mean, *crime!*" I said, taking out my badge and polishing it on my shirt. 

The Private I's and the Case of the Mixed-Up Message

By Wendi Silvano

Art by Karen Stormer Brooks

Izzy, Inez, and Ivy were reading in the living room. The phone rang.

"I'll get it," said Izzy.

It was Mom, calling from work.

"I really need your help," she said.

"What's wrong?" asked Izzy.

"Grandma called," said Mom.

"She's having a hard time seeing after her eye operation. She wants to come stay with us until she can see better. She said she would catch the first flight out."

"Great!" said Izzy.

"We need to figure this out fast."

"There's only one problem," said Mom. "She said she would e-mail me what time her flight gets in. My computer is down at work. I tried to call her, but the line's busy. I'm afraid I'll miss her flight."

"How can we help?" asked Izzy.

"You can check our family e-mail account," said Mom. "Find Grandma's message and call me."

"We're on it," said Izzy.

"What's up?" asked Inez.

"Grandma's coming!" said Izzy.

"Fantastic!" said Ivy. "When?"

"That's what we need to find out. Come on."

They went to the computer. Izzy clicked into the family's e-mail.

"There's Grandma's message!" said Ivy.

Izzy opened the message.

*Hi, rbrtyonn,
My plsnr lsnfd sy gibr o'vlovk.
I vsn'y esiy yo drr you sll.
Lobr,
Htsnfms*

"This message is all mixed up," said Inez. "I can't read it."

"We need to figure this out fast," said Izzy.





“This looks like a case for the Private I’s,” said Inez. She got her notebook. She wrote: **The Case of the Mixed-Up Message.**

“Let’s think,” said Izzy. “Why would the letters be mixed up?”

“Grandma wrote in code?” said Ivy.

“I see what happened!”

“I don’t think she would,” said Inez. “She can barely even see.”

“That’s an important clue,” said Izzy.

Inez wrote: **Grandma can barely see to write.**

“Maybe she couldn’t see to type very well,” said Ivy.

“That’s it!” said Izzy. “We need to look at the keyboard.”

Inez wrote: **Plan: Check the keyboard.**

Izzy looked at Grandma’s note. Then she looked at the keyboard. “We need to figure out *how* Grandma mixed up the letters.”

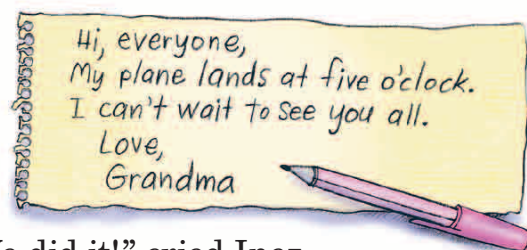
“I’m sure the end is supposed to say *Love, Grandma,*” said Inez.

“Brilliant!” said Izzy. She put her fingers on the keyboard. She looked at the last word of the message.

“If *H* should be *G* . . . and *t* should be *r* . . . I see what happened! Grandma’s left hand shifted over one key by mistake.”

“Try the rest of the note,” said Inez. “See if it makes real words.”

Izzy moved her fingers on the keyboard. Inez wrote down each letter in her notebook.



“We did it!” cried Inez.

“Way to go!” said Izzy. “I’ll call Mom.”

“And I’ll go find Grandma’s favorite blanket,” said Ivy.

Inez wrote: **The Case of the Mixed-Up Message: Solved.** 🍀

The Mystery of Pig's Missing Leaves

By Lynnea Annette Art by Don Tate



Pig was raking up her leaves: orange, red, yellow, brown. The orange ones looked like pumpkin sunsets.

She liked them.

She put down her rake.

She began to collect the orange leaves in her apron.

Pig walked inside with an apron full of pumpkin sunsets. She put them in a bowl and set them in her window.

Jackrabbit jumped by Pig's house. He saw the rake. He saw the red and yellow and brown leaves. He decided to help Pig. He began raking the leaves.

The red leaves looked like roses and raspberries.

He liked them.

He put down the rake.

He began to collect the red leaves in his bag.

He jumped back to his house with a bag full of roses and raspberries. He put them in a bowl and set them in his window.

Spotted Dog trotted by Pig's house. He saw the rake.

**Jackrabbit
liked the
red leaves.**



He saw the yellow and brown leaves. He decided to help Pig. He picked up the rake. He began raking the leaves.

The yellow leaves looked like butter in the sun.

He liked them.

He put down the rake.

He began to collect the yellow leaves in his sand bucket.

He trotted back to his house with a bucket full of butter in the sun. He put the leaves in a bowl and set them in his window.

Armadillo walked by Pig's house. She saw the rake. She saw the brown leaves. She decided to help Pig. She picked up the rake.

The crunchy brown leaves looked like fun.

She raked all the brown leaves into her wheelbarrow.

Pig came out to finish raking her yard—but her yard was all clear! What a mystery. She looked at the houses on her street. She saw beautiful bowls filled with pumpkin sunsets, roses and raspberries, and butter in the sun.

Armadillo's window was empty. But her yard was not.

Pig ran to knock on Jackrabbit's door. "Look!" she said.

Pig and Jackrabbit ran to knock on Spotted Dog's door. "Look!" they said.

Pig, Jackrabbit, and Spotted Dog ran to Armadillo's yard.

The yellow leaves looked like butter in the sun.



Pig came out to finish raking her yard—but her yard was clear!

"Come join in the fun!" said Armadillo.

"Whee!" they all said, jumping in a giant pile of crunchy brown leaves. 4

