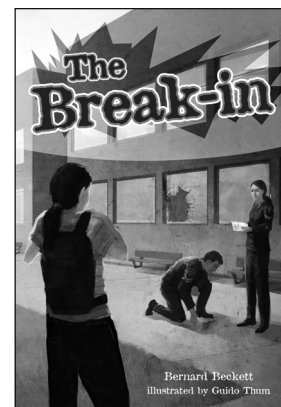# The Break-in

by Bernard Beckett
illustrated by Guido Thum

Book Summary

A break-in occurs at Mei Li's school, and suddenly, she finds herself accused. This mystery story explores Mei Li's fight to prove her innocence, and the real culprit is revealed to everyone's surprise.

Features of the Book

- Realistic fiction
- Mystery to be solved
- Surprise ending
- Need to infer meaning
- Inclusion of factual information

Purpose

The Break-in can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills and understandings:

S analysing the structure of a narrative;

S making, revising, and confirming predictions;

S summarising information;

S analysing a character;

S exploring word meanings and derivations;

S exploring how new developments in forensic science are used in the fight against crime.

Investigation Tools

- Digging Deeper – What Is Blood?, page 29
- Step by Step – DNA Fingerprinting, pages 30–31
- Making Connections – Artists of the Bird World, page 32

The Guided Reading Lesson

S Analysing the structure of a narrative

S Making, revising, and confirming predictions

S Summarising information

Introducing the text

Review what the students know about the structure of a narrative. Ask them to consider mystery stories where an author doesn't reveal the identity of the culprit until the end.

- *In a mystery, is the plot structure the same as in general narratives? What might be different?*
- *What techniques do authors use to keep the reader guessing?* (giving clues in the text, foreshadowing, using parallel storylines, telling the story from different points of view, using the first person)

Tell the students that in this lesson, they will be making predictions and analysing the structure of the story to find out how the author develops the plot.

Read the cover and the blurb with the students.

Make a chart on the board (see below) to record summaries and predictions.

Chapter	Summary	Predictions
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to read the first chapter, then help them to analyse it, using the questions, "Who?", "What?", "Where?", "When?", "Why?", and "How?" When everyone is clear about what has happened, discuss ways to summarise the chapter. Model (if more support is needed) or write a summary together and record it on the chart.
- *What have we learnt? What have we not learnt from this chapter?*
- *What predictions can you make?*

Record any predictions on the chart.

The students can read Chapter 2, then discuss what they have learnt and what remains unknown. Ask the students to suggest a summary for the chapter, then write it on the chart.
- *What clues or details might be important later?*
- *Can you confirm any of your predictions about the intruder?*
- *What is the effect of the last sentence? What might happen next?*

Record their predictions on the chart.

Tell the students to continue reading, looking for clues and checking their predictions. Pause at the end of each chapter for the students to summarise what has happened. Write the summaries and any new predictions on the chart.

When the students have read to the end of the story (page 28), review the chapter summaries and the changing predictions.
- *Were you surprised at the result?*
- *Look back at Chapter 1. How did the author conceal the identity of the culprit?*
- *Do you think the main problem was solving the crime or proving Mei Li's innocence? Are they the same? Why do you think that?*
- *How might the perspectives of the characters affect the way they respond to the DNA results? (For example, would the police be satisfied with the proof? Would Mei Li's classmates be nicer to her? Would Ms Collett change her opinion of Mei Li?)*

Revisiting the Text

The activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson, during later reading sessions as mini-lessons, or as independent activities.

S Analysing the structure of a narrative

The students can construct a story map to show how the plot developed. Ask them to record the setting, the characters, the events, the resolution, and the theme or "big idea" of the story.

S Analysing a character

✎ The students can explore the traits that helped Mei Li work toward a resolution of the problem. They can use copies of the blackline master to record what she thought, said, and did, as well as how she changed over the course of the story.

S Exploring word meanings and derivations

Point out the word "meander" on page 6. Discuss its possible meanings, using the text on that page. The students can then look up its meaning and derivation. Other words suitable for a similar study include "loitered" (page 7), "makeshift" (page 9), "formidable" (page 15), and "retorted" (page 21).

S Exploring how new developments in forensic science are used in the fight against crime

The students can read and discuss "What Is Blood?" on page 29. They can use this as a model to find out what other forms of evidence are used in forensic science. Examples could include analysis of hairs, fabric, or fibres; the use of chemicals to detect the presence of blood; the use of fingerprint databanks; and the digital reconstruction of crime scenes. The students may wish to use ideas they have seen on TV crime shows, but their investigations should include genuine scientific information.

The students can record their findings.