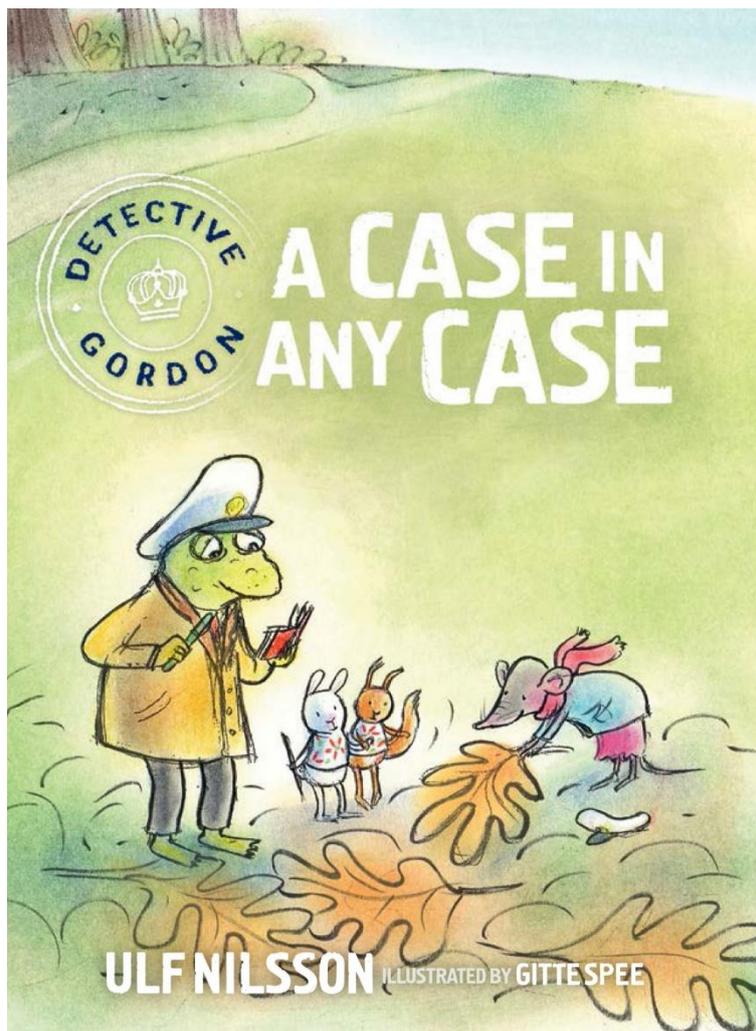


Teaching Notes

Detective Gordon: A Case in Any Case

Written by Ulf Nilsson and illustrated by Gitte Spee



Synopsis:

Gordon is on vacation, and Buffy is the sole detective at the small police station in the forest. It is not easy for a police officer to be alone. Especially when there are strange noises outside the station at night. Buffy decides to seek out Gordon in his little cottage by the lake to ask for help. After all, two police think twice as well as one. Two police are twice as brave!

The Author:

Ulf Nilsson is a celebrated Swedish children's writer, who has written over twenty books for all ages.

The Illustrator:

Gitte Spee graduated from the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, a renowned academy of fine art and design in the Netherlands. She now works in Amsterdam as a children's book illustrator.

Themes:

This warm and funny illustrated chapter book explores several themes.

The first theme evident is that of friendship. Gordon and Buffy are not only colleagues, but also great friends. They admire and appreciate each other's personality traits and talents and use these in order to work as a dynamic investigative police team.

The theme of kindness is explored. Gordon and Buffy are pleased when over one hundred forest animals accompany and help the police duo on an expedition to find some lost kindergarten animals.

Another theme illustrated is acknowledging and embracing the talents of others, while following your passion. Gordon's desire to continue to be a police officer after he has semi-retired, leads him into some predicaments as well as to feelings of jealousy. It is not until he accepts that Buffy is also a talented police officer who poses no threat to his own talents, that he is able to return to work where he can successfully solve cases working alongside, his friend and colleague, Buffy, once more.

Two further themes in the book are those of humour, and the joy and power of delicious cakes. Both are helpful and appreciated by the two hard-working police officers as they strive to keep the forest in which they inhabit a happy and peaceful place in which to live.

Activities:

1. Look at the cover image and title. What do you think this story might be about?
2. Anthropomorphism is when gods, animals or things are depicted with human attributes and behaviours. Find five examples of this from the book. Find other books where animals are depicted in this way, for example, *Wolf and Dog* (Gecko, 2013), *The Day No one was Angry* (Gecko, 2014) or *Travels of an Extraordinary Hamster* (Gecko, 2015).
3. After reading the book, choose and discuss your favourite moment in the book. Then write a plot summary of the events leading up to, or following on from, this moment.
4. There are many language features in the book, for example, similes, onomatopoeia. Find the definition of each, match each with the following examples from the book below and then find more examples for each from the book.
 - 'Buffy was small, like a cinnamon bun beneath the cover' (p. 6).
 - 'Someone was scrabbling at the windowpane' (p. 7).
5. Gordon and Buffy are the main characters in this book. Do you like them as characters? Why/why not? Write a character study of either Gordon or Buffy. Think about their physical appearance and character traits.
6. In pairs, discuss what you think are the most humorous elements in this book and how they succeed in being funny and entertaining.
7. Choose and complete one, or more, of the following creative tasks:
 - A. The book features descriptions of the police station (pp. 5-6) and Gordon's little house (p. 11). Write a description of a place you love. In pairs, read your description to your partner and get them to draw what they hear.
 - B. Gordon is writing a book entitled *Funny Stories about Mice and Toads* (p. 11). Use this title as inspiration for a short story about Buffy and Gordon. Write, illustrate, bind and publish your own children's picture book of your story. Read your story to a younger class level.



- C. Buffy imagined she was Gordon and imitated him (pp. 21-22). Imagine you are one of the characters from the book. What would you do to imitate this character? Divide into groups. Share your imitations and see if your fellow group members can guess which character you are imitating.
- D. To give her courage Buffy hums and writes out the police march (p. 25). In groups, create a tune and write some more lyrics for the march. Perform it for your class.
- E. Gordon and Buffy enjoy eating many treats throughout the book, such as 'pear cakes' (p. 27), 'walnut balls, strawberry drops and sugar bombs' (p. 96), and 'night cakes' or 'dark chocolate clouds' (p. 102). Create an illustrated recipe/cookbook of Gordon and Buffy's treats. Imagine your book is going to be published professionally. In groups, research which publishing company you would like to publish it and why. Then write a proposal explaining why you think this company should publish your book. Mention elements such as the potential readership, your book's unique selling points and what you would like as the main components of the marketing campaign (posters, advertisements for print and radio, etc.).
- F. Buffy is 'a master of scents. Gordon smelled of freshly made bed, cakes, and a funny book' (p. 33). Use either smell, or one of the other five senses, as inspiration to write an illustrated descriptive paragraph or poem.
- G. To protect Gordon from the fox, Buffy thought she could make a flour bomb (p. 35 & p. 101). Make an illustrated instructional pamphlet about how to make a flour bomb.
- H. Two of the kindergarten animals go missing (pp. 39-41). Create a lost poster for them including a picture based on the photo descriptions (p. 44).
- I. In pairs, make your own version of the farmer book that Buffy and the kindergarten children make together (pp. 66-68).
- J. The expedition party led by Gordon and Buffy was made up of at least 'one hundred and eighty good and kind animals. Not one wicked' (p. 95). Write a description of the successful expedition from one of these animal's point of view. Think about how you would describe the physical scene, any other characters who were involved, and your feelings about the incident.

8. Examine the illustrations in the book. Do you like the style? What colours are used? What kinds of lines and textures are used? Choose your favourite illustration from the book and create your own artistic interpretation of it, for example, a painting, drawing, photograph, model, poem, etc, or design your own illustrations for the cover and/or one page of text.
9. In groups, adapt an episode or chapter from the book for a performance in your classroom. Devise a script, create scenery, choose music and make costumes or puppets to represent each character. If you have access to a video camera, film your adaptation.
10. Gecko Press publisher, Julia Marshall, states that the Gordon and Buffy book series 'is like the best kind of friendship: full of silly humour and delicious cakes but giving space to think about the way we all are. The books have a big heart: we could all learn from Detective Gordon.' In groups, discuss this statement and list what you think, as readers, we could learn from Detective Gordon.
11. Review the book for your favourite magazine, website or blog. What do you like about it? Why? What did you dislike about the book? Why? Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten.
12. This book is a stand-alone story in the warm and funny bestselling series about Detective Gordon and his clever assistant, Buffy. The series includes, *The First Case* (Gecko, 2015) and *Detective Gordon: A Complicated Case* (Gecko, 2016). If you have not done so already, find and read these books.