

Inspired by Margie Palatini's The Web Files, these students created original mystery stories with hard-boiled detective voices. Read both stories, and talk about how both writer used unique techniques to convey voice in their stories. The lesson that inspired this writing was found on-line at the WritingFix website: <http://writingfix.com>

Pandective

by John, eighth grade writer



This is the zoo. My name is Pandective. I am a panda, and the animal detective here at the New York Zoo. Rumors have been going around lately. I don't speak "Human" very well, but it sounds like an animal is missing.

It was night. I am not some dumb animal, so I can easily pick my lock. I walked out of my cage and headed over to Monkey's for some answers because his "Human" is better than mine. I found Monkey's cage and when he appeared, I asked "Did an animal go missing and, if so, which one?"

Monkey replied, "It was Lion, but I had nothing to do with it, I swear!" His eyes were very shifty and he talked loud and fast. Monkey then said, "You should go talk to Python. I am sure she knows something."

I slowly trotted over to Python. Python is kind of creepy. For one thing, I always have trouble seeing her in her terrarium. That, and she drags out her "S's."

Out of nowhere, a voice said, "A pleas-s-s-sure to s-s-s-see you, Pandective. Find any clues-s-s-s yet?"

I strained my ears to understand what Python was saying to me. "How did you know?" I asked.

"Monkey was-s-s-s s-s-s-screaming about it; the whole zoo can hear him," Python replied.

I asked, "Have you seen Lion anywhere? He disappeared."

"No I haven't seen Lion," Python answered, "but I s-s-s-saw a dark figure being dragged into the aquarium."

I hurried over to the aquarium, where I was greeted by Bassfish. He's the head honcho of the aquarium and a pretty rough character. Bassfish said, "Lion's not here. End of story. Badda-bing, badda-boom."

It was always hard to understand what Bassfish was saying over the splashing and slapping sounds I heard in the distance.

Finally, Bassfish yelled over his shoulder to someone, "Will you quit hitting that cat?! I'm trying to talk here!" Bassfish clapped his fin over his mouth, aware that he had given away his secret.

My ears had perked up. I quickly ran to the top of the aquarium where I saw Bassfish's henchmen slapping and splashing Lion. I shoved the fish away and helped the startled Lion out of the water.

I took Lion back to his cage, and smiled as I said, "That makes one more case cracked by Pandective."

Case Book of a Private (Girl's) Eye

by Jordan, eighth grade writer



7:00 a.m. This is the National Museum.

I was going to see the new exhibit, the Angel made by Michelangelo. But I was interrupted with a phone call. It was a code 314A784910CC! If you don't know detective lingo, that means that the Angel was stolen.

8:00 a.m. This is the museum director's office.

The director, Doctor Monty Malcolm Mason Montgomery, the man who called, tells his story. Everything is revealed, including the crime scene, the robber, and his accomplice.

Dr. Mmmm (which is short for his ridiculously long name) was a nervous wreck. He was wearing a business suit that looked too tight for his pudgy little body. He mumbled a few words that I couldn't make out.

Then, he spoke clearly: "The man was in a truck with our precious Angel in it. As soon as the Angel was on, he hopped in and his friend drove them away. We couldn't make out their faces in the dark, but I did manage to see their license plate. It said KNJ6891."

I scribbled everything down furiously. Then, without even bothering to say goodbye, I strode out the door.

10:00 a.m. This is Poppet's Rental Cars.

We were able to track down the car by license to whom it belonged to. I'm meeting the man who runs this operation right now: Mr. Merriam Poppet.

The man had suspicious, squinty eyes and slick, greasy hair. A bristly beard stuck out of his chin, his shirt stained with sweat.

He said, "All I did was rent out a truck to the guy!! I mean honestly, when he paid me to steal the statue, how was I supposed to know it was actually worth something? We just picked it up, and then dropped it off!" He clapped a hand over his mouth. Before he went to jail, I made him tell his partner's name. "Hold on, let me think...uh...um...Hang on a sec, it's on the tip of my tongue...Oh, that's it! His name is Lenny Villa!" And with that, I left.

2:40 p.m. This is Lenny Villa's house.

I think we've finally got us our bad guy. I'm waiting here until he gets home, and then I'll nab him!

He pulled up into his driveway. His expression was panicked for a moment, but only for a moment. Then he just smiled like a snake and slinked towards me. I leaned against the porch and immediately questioned him about the Angel, but he quickly changed the subject. Sneaky, this one.....

Lenny talked to me for a while about the basketball game. I played along for awhile, pretending to lose hope. I was just about to "leave" when a large bulge under a cover in the truck.

"What is that?" I questioned.

"Oh, that's just a...um...fish I caught at the lake," Lenny replied in a nervous voice.

I lifted the flap and.....it was the Angel! That was the last time anyone heard from Lenny Villa. I hope that he's learned his lesson.