

# Discussion Questions & Activity Suggestions for the **Cam Jansen** series by David A. Adler



click!  
click!

click!  
click!



Can you **CLICK** your way to solving mysteries like Cam?  
Join the Cam Jansen Super Sleuth Squad!  
Visit [www.penguin.com/camjansensleuthsquad](http://www.penguin.com/camjansensleuthsquad) for more details.

# *Official Membership Certificate*

## **Cam Jansen Super Sleuth Squad**

This certificate signifies that



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is an official member of the  
Cam Jansen Super Sleuth Squad.  
Members of the Super Sleuth Squad pledge to  
*CLICK* their way to the solution of each mystery they encounter.

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Member Signature

Cam Jansen

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Cam Jansen

David A. Adler

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David A. Adler  
Author of the Cam Jansen Series

Leslie Prives

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Leslie Prives  
Senior Detective, Cam Jansen Super Sleuth Squad

**D**ear Fellow Super Sleuth,

**Welcome to the very first meeting of the Cam Jansen Super Sleuth Squad!** Cam has been a beloved mystery maven since 1980, and we're excited to bring you this activity kit to use while enjoying all of her adventures. With the original Cam Jansen titles perfect for chapter book readers and the Young Cam Jansen series written especially for younger readers, there's sure to be something for every sleuth you know.

**Take a moment to meet author David A. Adler**, whose experiences as a teacher himself have prompted him to create these—and other—easy reader series. His relatable approach to the writing process will inspire students to brainstorm their own suspenseful tales!

**It'll be a race to see who solves the mystery first after students learn to practice critical thinking skills while reading!** The discussion questions we've provided will test students' comprehension of mystery concepts, and the classroom activities will give them an opportunity to experiment with their own sleuthing abilities.

**Study up on mystery vocabulary** and knock people out with your crime-fighting lingo. You'll need it to crack the secret code we've included!

**Gather all the clues to have students write their own mystery tales!** We've broken down the crucial elements of a mysterious story and provided a sheet to encourage individual brainstorming—with writing tips from Cam's own David A. Adler.

**Photocopy the Reading Log enclosed so students can track their progress and thoughts.** Students will love the sense of accomplishment they'll get from seeing the total number of pages they can read in a school year!

**Check out the enclosed goodies!** In this booklet you'll find a slew of reproducible activities and information sheets as well as a Cam Jansen Super Sleuth Squad Membership Certificate—perfect for recognizing (officially!) all of your super sleuths! Then, whenever you call your squad to action, don't forget to include the guest of honor, Cam Jansen, whose convenient standee-form makes it simple to set her up in the classroom. Be sure to have students mark their page with a Cam Jansen bookmark, an easy way for them to keep track of where they are in their current case!

It doesn't take a detective to see that this initial print edition of the Super Sleuth Squad is full of ways to introduce students to Cam and the excitement of mystery reading and writing. **Moving forward, our fan club will be meeting online at [www.penguin.com/camjansensleuthsquad](http://www.penguin.com/camjansensleuthsquad).** Be sure to visit the site periodically to check out what's new—from featured titles with in-depth discussion guides to classroom activity suggestions to the latest and greatest sleuth supplies! **With updated content and downloadable freebies, it will be easy and fun to include Cam in your lesson plans all year long.**

**Questions? Suggestions? Stories to share about your experiences with the enclosed activities and materials?** Email us at [schoolandlibrary@us.penguin.com](mailto:schoolandlibrary@us.penguin.com). We'd love to hear from you!

*Leslie Prives*

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Senior Detective, Cam Jansen Super Sleuth Squad  
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# Meet the Author!

## DAVID A. ADLER

**David A. Adler** is the author of more than 200 fiction and nonfiction books for young readers. He was a math teacher for more than nine years before he wrote the Cam Jansen series. Born in New York City, Mr. Adler still lives in New York with his wife and family. In addition to the Cam Jansen and Young Cam Jansen mysteries, Mr. Adler is also the author of the Jeffrey Bones mystery series, many picture books, including *Campy: The Story of Roy Campanella*, and a middle-grade novel, *Don't Talk to Me About the War*.

### A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID A. ADLER

**Q: Did you like to read mysteries when you were a child?**

A: I have always loved to read mysteries because they entertain me and challenge me to solve the mystery myself.

**Q: Why did you decide to write the Cam Jansen mysteries?**

A: I had been a math teacher in the New York City school system and was just beginning a child-care leave. My first son had been born and I planned to stay home and take care of him while my wife returned to her work as a school psychologist. I had already written a few books, but I wanted to work on a series. I wanted to create a character young readers would want to read about again and again.

I also remembered the trouble I had when I first learned to read, the difficulty I had with the books meant to follow the Dick and Jane series. It was too big a leap for me. Even in the late 1970s, when my first son was born, there were still very few books between the easy-to-reads and the eight-to-twelves. Somehow, children were expected to make that leap. For some, it was no problem. For me and many others, it was. The Cam Jansen books are transitional readers, books for children "in transit" from easy-to-reads to middle-grade novels.

**Q: Tell us something about the real Cam Jansen. Is Eric real, too?**

A: Cam Jansen is modeled after an elementary school classmate who had a photographic memory. I set off writing about him, but made lots of changes by the time I was done. My classmate was a boy and Cam is a girl, and unlike my classmate, Cam says, "Click!" and solves mysteries. Eric is based on me, and my hope from the very beginning was that as Cam pulls Eric into each mystery, she'll pull along my readers.

**Q: Where do you get the ideas for your mysteries?**

A: Many of the settings for the stories—the circus, zoo, and sports-card shows—come from places I've taken my children, but the mysteries are my inventions. When it's time to write a new Cam I go to the library, where I will not be disturbed. By thinking and writing all sorts of lists of possible settings and situations, I come up with an idea. I do have the beginnings of outlines that just didn't work out. I've had days when all I have to show for all my work are discarded papers. That's all part of the writing process.

Visit David A. Adler at: [www.davidaadler.com](http://www.davidaadler.com)

Write to him at: [CAMJ563@aol.com](mailto:CAMJ563@aol.com)

or

David A. Adler

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# My Personal Cam Jansen Reading Log



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Title	Number of Pages	Date Started	Date Finished	Recommend to a Friend?
_____	_____	_____	_____	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	_____	_____	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	_____	_____	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	_____	_____	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	_____	_____	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	_____	_____	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	_____	_____	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Total Pages Read \_\_\_\_\_

# Be Convincing! Talk Like a Detective

## Commonly Used Mystery Vocabulary

Every good detective has a mental word bank of mystery terminology and commonly used phrases. How many of the words below have you heard before? How many have you used in sentences? Be the best and most convincing super sleuth you can be by learning how to work these words into your investigations.

**alibi**—an excuse or piece of information given by an accused person to prove that he/she was somewhere else when a crime was committed

**breakthrough**—a necessary piece of information or insight that helps solve a mystery

**clue**—an object, observation, or piece of information that helps to solve a mystery or puzzle

**crime**—an act that violates the law

**deduce**—to use logical reasoning and thinking to infer information

**detective**—a person who gathers information and investigates crimes

**evidence**—a statement, fact, or object used to prove the solution of a mystery

**hunch**—a feeling or a guess about something

**interrogate**—to ask questions or seek information from people

**motive**—the reason a person does something or acts in a certain way

**mystery**—something that is secret or unknown; a problem needing to be solved

**observant**—careful to look at things and note details

**perpetrator**—someone who is guilty of committing a crime

**photographic memory**—the ability to form an accurate and lasting visual memory or mental picture

**plot**—the arrangement of events or incidents in a story

**puzzle**—a game that tests someone's reasoning ability

**setting**—the time, place, surroundings, and circumstances in which a story takes place

**sleuth**—another name for a detective

**suspect**—a person who might have committed the crime

**victim**—a person who is harmed by a crime

**witness**—someone who saw something related to the crime



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# CRACK THE CODE!

## SECRET CODE

A=z B=y C=x D=w E=v F=u G=t H=s I=r J=q K=p L=o M=n  
N=m O=l P=k Q=j R=i S=h T=g U=f V=e W=d X=c Y=b Z=a

**Test your Super Sleuth skills!** Use the Secret Code above and the clues in parenthesis next to each question to fill in the blank mystery terms. For example, if the letter in the clue is an "A," fill in the blank with a "z."

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a person who might have committed a crime (HFHKVXG)
2. A \_\_\_\_\_ is the arrangement of events in a story (KOLG)
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an act that violates the law (XIRNV)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is another name for a detective (HOVFGS)
5. A \_\_\_\_\_ is something that is secret or unknown (NBHGVIB)
6. A \_\_\_\_\_ is someone who saw something related to the crime (DRGMVHH)
7. A \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ allows a person to form an accurate and lasting visual memory or mental picture (KSLGLTIZKSRX NVNLIB)
8. An \_\_\_\_\_ is an excuse given by an accused person to show that he/she was somewhere else when a crime was committed (ZORYR)
9. A \_\_\_\_\_ is the reason that a person does something or acts in a certain way (NLGREV)
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is a person who gathers information and investigates crimes (WVGXGREV)



ANSWER KEY: 1. suspect 2. plot 3. crime 4. sleuth 5. mystery 6. witness 7. photographic memory 8. alibi 9. motive 10. detective



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# The Five Essential Elements of a Mystery

**A mystery is a story that has five basic but important elements.** These five components are: the characters, the setting, the plot, the problem, and the solution. These essential elements keep the story running smoothly and allow the clues to the solution of the mystery to be revealed in a logical way that the reader can follow.

## Characters

The characters are the individuals that the story is about. The author should introduce the characters in the story with enough information that the reader can visualize each person. This is achieved by providing detailed descriptions of a character's physical attributes and personality traits. Every story should have a main character. The main character determines the way the plot or mystery will develop and is usually the person who will solve the problem the story centers upon. However, the other characters are also very important because they can provide clues to solve the mystery or they may even try to throw the main character (and the reader!) off track. All characters should stay true to the author's description throughout the story so that the reader can understand and believe the action that is taking place—and perhaps even predict which character may do what next.

## Setting

The setting is the location of the action. An author should describe the environment or surroundings of the mystery in such detail that the reader feels that he or she can picture the scene. Unusual settings (such as a fantasy world) can be interesting, but everyday settings can help a reader to better visualize the story. It can be especially fun to use a familiar setting for a mystery so that the reader feels even more connected to the plot!

## Plot

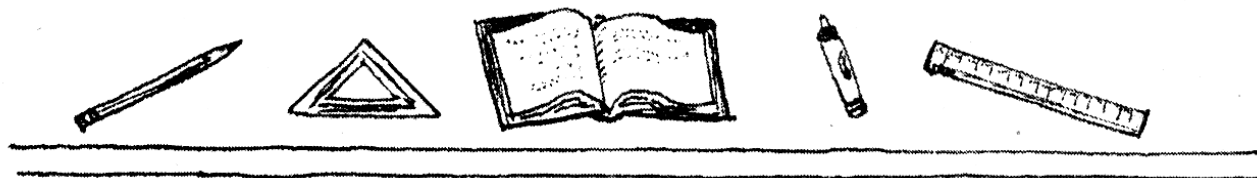
The plot is the actual story around which the entire book is based. A plot should have a very clear beginning, middle and end—with all the necessary descriptions and suspense—so that the reader can make sense of the action and follow along from start to finish.

## Problem

Every mystery has a problem to solve, usually who committed a crime and why. Authors should fill mystery stories with clues, so that the reader can try to solve the puzzle along with the characters. Sometimes, an author may insert a false clue just to throw the character (and reader) off.

## Solution

The solution to the problem is the way the action is resolved—finding a missing item or the person who stole it, for example. It is important that the solution be believable. Authors must be sure to include all the clues necessary for finding the solution in the story somewhere (even if they are hidden very sneakily!).



# Using the Five Elements of a Mystery in Reading and Writing

While reading a Cam Jansen or Young Cam Jansen book, fill in the blanks on this sheet with the necessary elements. Read carefully, and you may be able to solve the problem before Cam can say "Click!"

Once you've completed this sheet, use another copy to outline and write your own mystery. Remember, if you don't include all five elements, your main character may never solve the crime!

## SOME WRITING ADVICE FROM CAM JANSEN AUTHOR DAVID A. ADLER

"For me writing is a process. I begin with a story idea, with the main characters, and the setting. I struggle most with the 'voice,'—how I will tell the story. For me writing involves constant revisions. It's so much easier, I think, not to try and get the story just right in the first draft, to leave that for the second and third drafts. My best stories have been rewritten scores of times.

"I know when I write something, anything, no one else would have written it exactly the same way. It's true about your writing, too. An original story is like a fingerprint. Each story is unique."

### BOOK TITLE:

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### CHARACTERS:

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### SETTING:

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### PLOT:

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### PROBLEM:

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### SOLUTION:

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# Discussion Questions

**Jumpstart your mystery solving skills by using these discussion questions as a complement to any book (or all of them!) in the Cam Jansen series.**

-  What is a mystery? How is it similar to or different from a puzzle? Describe the mystery in the particular Cam Jansen book you're reading. Discuss the motive and evidence.
-  Discuss each of the characters in the Cam Jansen book you're reading. What are their defining character traits? Who do you like the most and who do you like the least? Which character are you most like?
-  Have a classroom discussion on what makes a good mystery. For example, are mysteries better if the plot is believable and real? Does having an unexpected "twist" at the end of a story make for a better mystery? What do you like about the Cam Jansen mysteries in particular?
-  What happens when people "jump to conclusions"? Have you ever jumped to a conclusion? What happened? How did it feel to know you had assumed something incorrectly?
-  How does Cam solve mysteries? Why do you think she always closes her eyes when she says "Click"? What does the phrase "a picture is worth a thousand words" mean? How does this apply to Cam Jansen's talent?
-  Do you wish you could have a photographic memory like Cam? What pictures (people, places, events, etc.) would you want to keep in your memory forever? How would you use your talent?
-  Do you think you would make a good detective? Why or why not? What types of skills or characteristics might be important when solving mysteries?
-  Think about the process of photography. Does a picture always reveal the truth? How can photos be altered to convey something that might not actually have been happening at the time a picture was taken? Look at some photos in a recent newspaper; what purpose do the article headline and photo captions serve? Can you think of any other headlines or captions that could have been used for the exact same photograph? Imagine the picture extending beyond the page—what else could have been in the scene?
-  After reading more than one Cam Jansen book, compare the different mysteries and the way that Cam solves each case. Is her process always the same? Are some mysteries easier to solve than others? Would you have done anything differently from what she did? Which case would you have most liked to help Cam solve?

Remember to visit [www.penguin.com/camjansensleuthsquad](http://www.penguin.com/camjansensleuthsquad) for additional discussion questions.



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# Classroom Activities



Ask a partner to read a Cam mystery out loud. Don't look at the book cover or illustrations, and draw your own pictures of one or more of the book's scenes. How did you decide what to draw? What words or phrases helped you the most in visualizing the scene?



Expand your imagination! In groups, create a "mystery" situation of your own. For example, think of an object and let other students ask you "yes" or "no" questions about it. See how long it takes them to solve your puzzle. Or stick an object in a covered shoe box and cut a hole in the box top large enough for a classmate's hand to slide in. One at a time, group members should stick their hands into the hole, keeping their eyes closed or turned away so they can't see inside, and try to determine what they are touching based on how it feels and any clues you may give them. But be careful—no sharp objects please!



Read one of the books in the Cam Jansen Series and make a note of the cause and effect relationships that occur. After you have finished, think about the major cause of the book's mystery—the motive—and write down the events that took place as a result of that reason. Do you think the person who committed the crime was justified in his or her actions?



Take various photographs of your classroom and/or classmates. Then, in groups of four and using the same pictures, create an "illustrated story" with a title and captions for the photos. How does each group's story differ?



Play memory games with your classmates like the ones at the end of some of the Cam Jansen mysteries. You could:



Close your eyes and answer questions about the classroom (what's displayed on the bulletin boards, what color shirt your teacher is wearing, etc.). Does your photographic memory stand up to Cam's?



Play the matching memory game in this packet. Cut out the cards on page thirteen and place them face down on a desk. Take turns picking up two cards at a time to see if they picture the same illustration. If they do, keep the pair and take another turn. If not, place both cards face down again and let the next person take a turn. The person who makes the most matches (and has the best memory!) wins.



Study the vocabulary words on page four and then try your hand at cracking the code on page six!



Now that your detective caps are on, try writing a story of your own. Flip to page seven for a writing worksheet that will get you started!



Build an acrostic for one of the characters in the Cam Jansen series. To build an acrostic, write the name of the character vertically on a piece of paper. Then write a sentence or group of words that begins with each of the letters in the character's name. Each sentence or group of words should describe the character and his/her role in the story. Then read your acrostic out loud like a poem!



Use the mystery vocabulary words on page four of this booklet to create your own mystery word find. Use graph paper to arrange the placement of the words and then fill in the other squares with random letters. Don't forget to include a word bank to help your classmates! Trade word finds with a partner and see who can solve the puzzle first.

Visit [www.penguin.com/camjansensleuthsquad](http://www.penguin.com/camjansensleuthsquad) for additional activities.



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# Practicing Critical Reading Skills

**Every sleuth needs his or her thinking cap on when solving a mystery!** Using the Cam Jansen or Young Cam Jansen mysteries, practice your critical reading skills by making predictions, comparing and contrasting information, and analyzing cause and effect. Read the explanations below for tips on how to *CLICK* the case shut—even before Cam does.

1. Making a **prediction** means thinking about what will happen in the story before you actually read further. Select a Cam Jansen book and read only the title and the first page. Then close the book and write down what you think will happen next. Read on to see if you are correct. Continue to do this at the end of each chapter you read, making predictions about the characters' words or actions, how certain items might become important clues, or the outcome of the mystery. Use the sheet on page eleven to help keep track of your predictions. Take a look back at your predictions after you finish reading the book. How many were right? How many times did you alter your thinking? Did you make more educated guesses at the beginning of the novel or at the end?
2. When you **compare** two things, you explain how they are alike. When you **contrast** them, you find ways that they are different. Oftentimes, writers use certain words to show the reader that they are comparing or contrasting items. Words such as "also," "like," or "as" give the reader a signal that a comparison is being made. Words such as "although" or "however" often signal that a contrast is being made. Practice comparing and contrasting as you read—for example, compare and contrast the characters of Cam and Eric or compare and contrast the last two Cam Jansen books you have read. Use the Venn Diagram on page twelve or create your own chart to illustrate your findings.
3. A **cause** is the reason something happens, while an **effect** is the result of that cause. Therefore, demonstrating cause and effect means showing what happened first to create the situation that comes afterwards. There can often be more than one cause, or more than one effect, for each sequence of events. After reading a Cam Jansen mystery, determine what caused the criminal to commit the crime (this is often thought of as the **motive**). Is there more than one reason? Next, explain the effects of that cause. You already know one (the crime took place), but what else happens in the story because of this cause?



# Demonstrating Critical Reading Skills

## Making Predictions

BOOK TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

Based on the title of the book, what do you think the case is about?

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Read only the first page. Is your prediction still the same? How has reading a little further on helped you make your prediction?

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Read the first two chapters of the book. What are some important details that you predict may become clues in the case?

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Use the lines below to make additional predictions as you continue to read the book.

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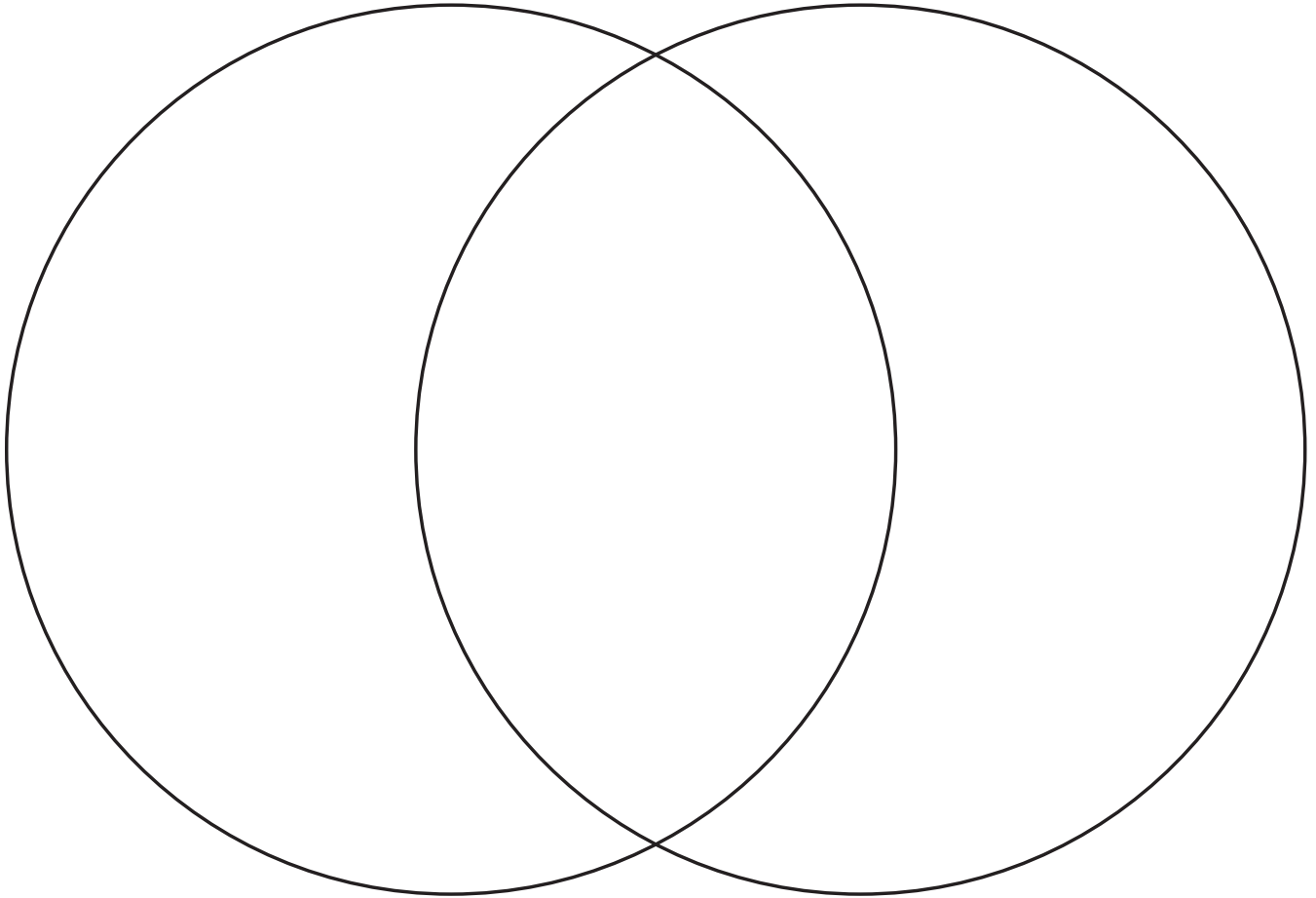
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# Venn Diagrams

Venn Diagrams can be used to compare and contrast almost anything! Use the one below to compare and contrast two items of your choosing. Remember to label what each side represents on the lines provided.



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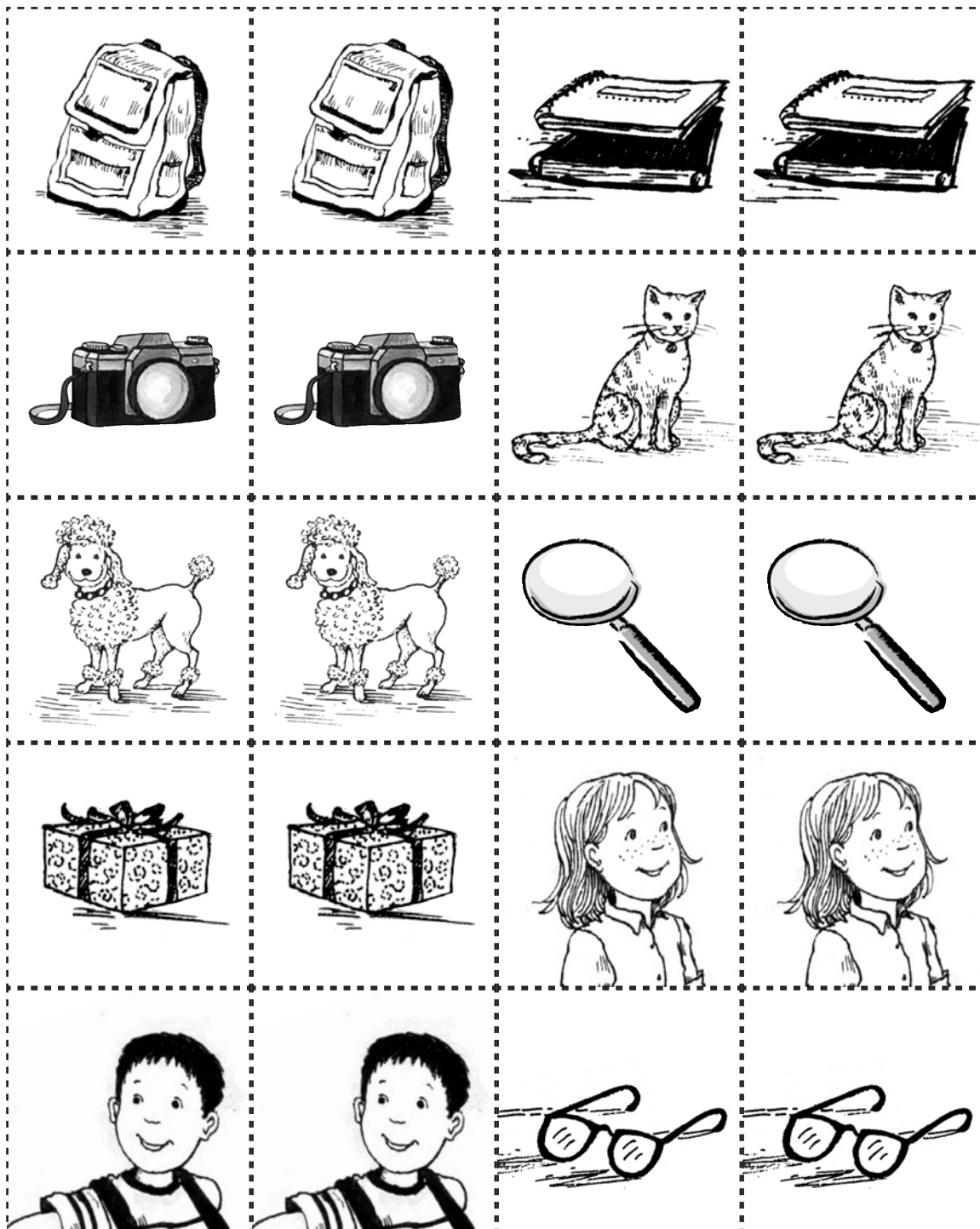
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# CLICK! Cam Jansen Photographic Memory Game

Following the rules on page nine of this booklet, use the pieces below to test your photographic memory skills.



# How many mysteries have *you* solved?

Collect all the Cam Jansen books for your school or library!

#1 The Mystery of the Stolen Diamonds  
PB: 9780142400104 • HC: 9780670200399

#2 The Mystery of the U.F.O.  
PB: 9780142400111

#3 The Mystery of the Dinosaur Bones  
PB: 9780142400128 • HC: 9780670200405

#4 The Mystery of the Television Dog  
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#10 The Mystery at the Monkey House  
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#19 The Barking Treasure Mystery  
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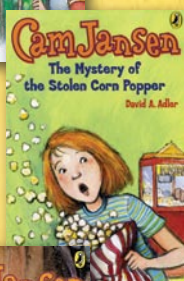
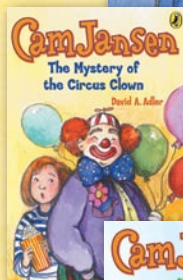
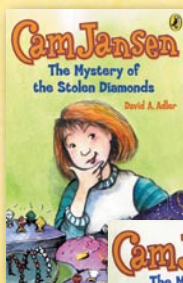
#20 The Birthday Mystery  
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#23 The Tennis Trophy Mystery  
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#24 The Snowy Day Mystery  
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#25 The Valentine Baby Mystery  
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#26 The Secret Service Mystery  
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#27 The Mystery Writer Mystery  
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