

***The Crayon Caper***  
**Educator's Guide**

Archer the Therapy Dog Mysteries, Book 1

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Revised: 2/20/2026

# How to Use This Guide

Each chapter section includes a brief snapshot, vocabulary options pulled from the chapter text, a class activity, SEL discussion notes, and a writing prompt.

Vocabulary: Each list contains 10 options that appear in the chapter; select words that best fit your students and your pacing.

Note: *The Crayon Caper* and this Educators Guide were written for 3<sup>rd</sup> Graders, but you may find that they are appropriate for other grades as well.

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# Chapter 1: The Missing Crayons

## Chapter Snapshot

- Archer arrives to visit Mrs. Percy’s class.
- A box of crayons goes missing; feelings start to bubble up as kids wonder what happened.
- Charlie notices glitter near Maya’s desk, starts a clue notebook, and teams up with Archer to investigate.

**Vocabulary:** Choose words to pre-teach, revisit, or add to a word wall.

elementary	retriever
sunlight	sparkly
golden	fluffy
dragon	caper
mystery	therapy

## Class Activity

Activity: Clue Notebook Kickoff

- Give students a one-page “detective notebook” template: Date, Place, What I Notice, My Question.
- Hide 6–8 classroom-safe mini clues (paperclip, sticker, tiny glitter dot on an index card, a note with one word).
- Students rotate in pairs; they record observations with magnifying glasses if available.
- Share as a class: Which observations felt strongest, and why?

## SEL Discussion Notes

- What feelings show up when something goes missing in a shared space?
- What is the difference between noticing and accusing?
- How does Archer help the class slow down and stay focused?

## Writing Prompt

Write about a time you noticed a clue in real life. What did you notice first, and what did you do next?

## Chapter 2: Tails and Trails

### Chapter Snapshot

- The class follows a glitter trail with Archer.
- The trail leads to the art shelf; the supply bin is missing too.
- Using a magnifying glass, Charlie studies the glitter; the class searches, but no new clues turn up yet.

**Vocabulary:** Choose words to pre-teach, revisit, or add to a word wall.

magnifying	leader
science	project
trail	beanbag
crowded	frowned
supply	worry

### Class Activity

Activity: Glitter Clue Lab

- Set up 3–5 “glitter samples” on index cards (different colors or mixes).
- Students use magnifying glasses to describe each sample using color words and details.
- Groups create a “glitter profile” card for one sample; they trade profiles and try to match the correct card to the sample.

### SEL Discussion Notes

- How can a team follow a leader without crowding or pushing?
- What does it look like to share tools fairly when people feel worried?
- What helps you keep going when a problem is not solved right away?

### Writing Prompt

Write step-by-step directions for following a trail. Include at least 5 steps and one safety or kindness rule.

## Chapter 3: The Mystery Grows

### Chapter Snapshot

- During read-aloud time, Maya and Charlie quietly watch Archer’s body language and talk like detectives.
- Sadie drops her backpack, and crayons spill out; the class worries she took the missing ones.
- Mrs. Percy reminds everyone to check facts, not accuse; Archer stays calm, and the mystery remains open.

**Vocabulary:** Choose words to pre-teach, revisit, or add to a word wall.

superpower	detective
hamster	promise
halfway	brand
label	react
aloud	wonder

### Class Activity

Activity: Evidence or Guess?

- Read short statements inspired by the chapter (example: “Crayons spilled on the floor.” “Someone took the crayons.”).
- Students sort statements into two columns: Evidence or Guess.
- As a class, discuss how to turn a guess into a testable question.

### SEL Discussion Notes

- How did the class react when they saw crayons spill out of a backpack?
- What can we do instead of pointing fingers when we feel surprised or worried?
- How does keeping an open mind help a community?

### Writing Prompt

Write a short dialogue where two characters remind each other to check facts before blaming someone.

## Chapter 4: Smells Like a Clue

### Chapter Snapshot

- A new smell fills the room, and Charlie notices Archer’s nose wiggling as he searches.
- Archer leads them to the reading corner; a tissue tucked behind a plant smells like lavender.
- Mrs. Percy explains lavender can be calming; Charlie records the clue and plans to look again later.

**Vocabulary:** Choose words to pre-teach, revisit, or add to a word wall.

bookcase	lavender
wiggling	tissue
leafy	behind
smell	noisy
notebook	fewer

### Class Activity

Activity: Calm Corner Design Challenge

- Students sketch a “reading corner” or calm space that helps someone reset when it feels too noisy.
- Using art supplies, students design a small sign or bookmark that names one calm strategy (example: quiet reading, drawing, counting).
- Share and discuss: What makes a space feel safe, respectful, and welcoming?

### SEL Discussion Notes

- Why might someone choose a quiet corner when they feel overwhelmed?
- What are respectful ways to protect quiet spaces in a classroom?
- How can we notice someone’s feelings without forcing them to explain?

### Writing Prompt

Describe a place that helps you feel calm. Use at least three sensory details: what you see, hear, and feel.

## Chapter 5: Reading Corner Clues

### Chapter Snapshot

- While students work on poems, Archer returns to the reading corner and sniffs with purpose.
- Charlie finds a folded paper lined with glitter; it lists crayon colors with checkmarks.
- Charlie adds the list to his notebook and realizes the clues point to a plan, not simple mischief.

**Vocabulary:** Choose words to pre-teach, revisit, or add to a word wall.

midnight	sunbeam
poetry	flame
sunset	folded
slipped	glanced
special	twice

### Class Activity

Activity: Color-Name Poetry

- Students create a list of “crayon color names” like the ones in the chapter.
- Each student invents two original color names and illustrates them with a small swatch or drawing.
- Students write a short poem or descriptive paragraph using at least three color names.

### SEL Discussion Notes

- Why might someone keep a list of favorites or special choices?
- How can curiosity be helpful? When can it cross a boundary?
- What does it mean to handle clues, and other people’s things, responsibly?

### Writing Prompt

Write a short mystery note that could be a clue in a story. Include one detail that makes the reader wonder what happens next.

## Chapter 6: Hidden in Plain Sight

### Chapter Snapshot

- Charlie cannot stop thinking about the clues, so he stays after school to investigate the reading corner.
- With Archer’s help, he finds a blue bag hiding behind a pillow; it contains the missing crayons.
- The crayons are wrapped in lavender-scented tissue bundles with fancy tags; Charlie feels overwhelmed, and Archer helps him settle so he can keep thinking.

**Vocabulary:** Choose words to pre-teach, revisit, or add to a word wall.

purpose	hidden
course	relax
sight	training
confused	tapping
thumped	pillow

### Class Activity

Activity: Sorting, Bundling, and Tags

- Give groups a mixed set of colored paper strips or crayons; challenge them to sort into 3–5 “groups” with names.
- Students create a simple tag for each group using neat lettering and one small design element.
- Reflect: How did your group decide on categories, and how did you handle disagreements?

### SEL Discussion Notes

- When Charlie feels upset, what clues show it in his body and actions?
- How does Archer help Charlie settle so he can think clearly?
- How can we ask for help when we feel stuck or overwhelmed?

### Writing Prompt

Make a prediction: Why would someone wrap crayons in tissue and sort them into bundles? Give two reasons supported by clues.

## Chapter 7: Art Room Rumor

### Chapter Snapshot

- Rumors spread through the classroom, but Charlie keeps the discovery of the crayons private until they learn the why.
- A report of a glitter trail in the fifth-grade art room sends Charlie and Archer on a quick check with a hallway pass.
- They find glitter-edged paper scraps with crayon color names in fancy writing; the clues match their case.

**Vocabulary:** Choose words to pre-teach, revisit, or add to a word wall.

definitely	hallway
rumor	whispering
backpack	borrowed
scrap	agree
grass	connected

### Class Activity

Activity: Rumor, Fact, and Responsible Questions

- Create two chart headings: Facts We Know and Rumors We Heard.
- Students add chapter details to the correct column.
- Choose one rumor and write 2–3 responsible questions that would help confirm or rule it out.

### SEL Discussion Notes

- How can rumors hurt people even when no one intends harm?
- What is a safer choice than repeating a rumor?
- Why is it important that Charlie asks permission and follows school rules?

### Writing Prompt

Write a short paragraph explaining how to stop a rumor in a kind way. Include one example sentence you could say.

## Chapter 8: Maya's Ideas

### Chapter Snapshot

- Charlie finally tells Maya what he and Archer found: the crayons, the lavender, and the fancy writing.
- Maya offers possibilities that fit the clues: careful sorting, gifts for others, and a secret kept out of shyness or fear.
- Archer's reaction suggests they may know the person behind the mystery.

**Vocabulary:** Choose words to pre-teach, revisit, or add to a word wall.

whoever	bundle
secret	breath
wrapped	sorting
between	together
pencil	share

### Class Activity

Activity: Theory Workshop

- In groups, students write two theories about the mystery using the clues Charlie shares with Maya.
- Under each theory, list at least three supporting clues.
- Groups share a theory without naming a suspect; focus on evidence and feelings.

### SEL Discussion Notes

- How does Maya encourage Charlie without making him feel silly?
- What makes it hard to share an idea when you are not sure it is right?
- How can a friend make it easier to speak up?

### Writing Prompt

Write two possible explanations for the mystery. For each, start one sentence with: "A clue that supports this is..."

## Chapter 9: Buddy Time

### Chapter Snapshot

- Mrs. Percy’s class heads to buddy time with kindergarteners for an art activity.
- Charlie and Maya notice glittery cards with bright swirling colors and fancy writing: “From a Secret Friend.”
- Mr. Hunt explains the cards keep appearing and make the kids happy; the class realizes the mystery is tied to these kindness surprises.

**Vocabulary:** Choose words to pre-teach, revisit, or add to a word wall.

kindergartener	afternoon
swirling	magic
fancy	nearby
bright	buddy
interested	track

### Class Activity

Activity: Secret Friend Cards

- Students design a card for someone who might need encouragement (another class, staff, family).
- Include a kind message and simple art details, such as bright swirls or a small pattern.
- Discuss: anonymous or signed? Decide as a class and explain why.

### SEL Discussion Notes

- Why do kind surprises feel powerful?
- What is the difference between kindness and showing off?
- How can a class make kindness a habit instead of a one-time event?

### Writing Prompt

Write a card message from a “Secret Friend.” Include a compliment and one encouraging sentence.

## Chapter 10: Laying Out the Clues

### Chapter Snapshot

- Back in class, Charlie shares the full chain of evidence from his notebook, step by step.
- He connects the glitter, the missing supply bin, the reading corner clues, the lavender-scented tissues, and the matching fancy writing.
- The class understands the person was not trying to be mean; everyone waits for the final answer.

**Vocabulary:** Choose words to pre-teach, revisit, or add to a word wall.

returned	gripped
exactly	stomach
staring	paused
calmer	beside
sound	whole

### Class Activity

Activity: Evidence Timeline Board

- Create an evidence timeline on chart paper; add key clues in order.
- Students draw arrows to show connections between clues (glitter, list, lavender, writing).
- As a class, agree on which clues are strongest and explain why.

### SEL Discussion Notes

- What makes Charlie nervous about speaking to the whole class?
- How can classmates show support during a presentation?
- What does it mean to be brave when you feel unsure?

### Writing Prompt

Write a 6–8 sentence summary of the mystery so far. Include the first clue and the most important new clue.

# Chapter 11: Secret Friend Steps Up

## Chapter Snapshot

- Lily steps forward and tells the truth: she made the “Secret Friend” cards and wrapped crayon bundles as gifts to help kindergarteners share.
- She explains the lavender, glitter, and fancy tags, and admits she hid the supply bin in the coat closet.
- The class responds with empathy and a plan; they start a Kindness Club, and Archer ends the day surrounded by laughter and belly rubs.

**Vocabulary:** Choose words to pre-teach, revisit, or add to a word wall.

kindness	surprise
glittery	shoulder
truth	brave
gasped	shaking
sorry	closet

## Class Activity

Activity: Making It Right

- Brainstorm ways to repair harm: return items, tell the truth, apologize, make a new plan, ask for help next time.
- Students create a simple “Kindness Club” charter poster with 3–5 promises.
- Optional: plan one small kindness project the class can do this week.

## SEL Discussion Notes

- Lily’s goal was kind, but her choice caused problems; how can both be true?
- What makes telling the truth hard when you feel scared?
- How does the class respond in a way that helps Lily learn and reconnect?

## Writing Prompt

Write a letter from Lily to the class explaining what she did, why she did it, and what she will do differently next time.

# Want to Know More About Therapy Dogs?

## Therapy Dog Basics

- A therapy dog works with a handler as a team and visits places like schools, libraries, and nursing homes to support comfort and connection.
- Therapy dogs are trained to be calm, friendly, and predictable around groups of people and everyday noises.
- A therapy dog is different from a service dog: a service dog is trained to perform specific tasks for one person with a disability.
- Some schools may have a facility dog. A facility dog has advanced training and typically works with trained staff in one setting.

## How to Greet a Therapy Dog

- Ask the handler first: "May I say hello?"
- Walk calmly; keep hands low and gentle.
- Pet the dog's shoulder or chest instead of reaching over the head.
- Stop if the handler says no or if the dog moves away.
- Thank the team when you are done.

## Writing Prompt

Write an informational paragraph explaining what a therapy dog is and how a therapy dog team can help a school community. Include three facts from the appendix.