

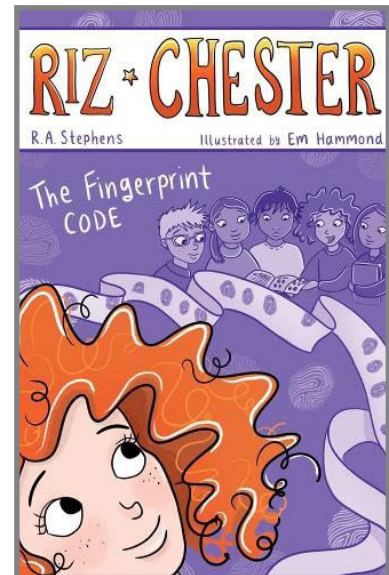
# The Fingerprint Code (Riz Chester #2)

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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Lower Primary

## SYNOPSIS

Riz and her band of friends have been enjoying trading trivia facts before school now that they all hang out. But on their way into school on Wednesday they get distracted when they notice a commotion outside the music rooms. Someone has stolen some music equipment!

Mrs. Calloway, the music teacher, tells Riz not to get involved but with her forensics log and the new fingerprint kit the detectives gave her, it's hard to stay out of it. Disguising their detective work as a school project, they try to match the new fingerprints to someone they know. They use logic, science and smarts to piece clues together. Can they crack the case?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rochelle Stephens is the Director of Wombat Books and Rhiza Press. With qualifications in teaching, counselling, editing and publishing, Rochelle brings expertise and knowledge to her work in publishing and editing. Since pioneering Wombat Books, Rochelle has been actively involved in every aspect of story development and book production.

Rochelle has written for science textbooks and other educational texts and is passionate about making science and maths real for children. While Rochelle loves genres like fantasy, she believes that when it comes to science and maths there is an amazing beauty in both without any fantasy needed and that when explored there is so much to appreciate. In her experience there is fun to being observant and planning out how to approach a curious query. But she also feels that kids should be kids and explore things safely!

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Em Hammond is an Autistic Artist and Illustrator from the Hunter region, NSW. She is also a busy mum to three young kids, and a Speech Pathologist specialising in neurodiversity-affirming practice.

Em loves spending her spare time creating images and stories that spark imagination and whimsy. She grew up reading the magic that was Roald Dahl and Enid Blyton, and knew that she wanted to create magic between pages someday. She definitely spent a lot of time drawing in the margins of her schoolbooks when she should have been learning about mathematical concepts.

Em dreams of one day writing and illustrating picture books and middle grade fiction that shine a bright light onto

Neurodivergent characters and experiences. Books are a special kind of magic and she hopes to make big, beautiful change in the world with her words and pictures.

### THEMES

- Friendship
- Problem solving
- Confidence
- Mystery
- Science

### STUDY NOTES

#### BEFORE READING

- Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
- Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
- Ask students if they can recognise the setting of this story from the cover image.

#### AFTER READING

- Ask students if Riz or her friends remind them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps.
- What is their first impression of Riz? If they have read the first book, has this book changed their opinion on Riz?
- How do Riz and her friends change over the course of the story? See if you can use descriptive words to explain the change, eg. confident, involved, thoughtful, energetic
- Ask students what Riz's situation was. Does she overcome the challenges in the end?
- Which character do you relate to most: Riz, Lachie A, Lochie C, Sabrina, Jenny, or Pieter? Do you find that you have interests in science or technology or music? Do you speak another language? Have you had to repeat a grade?
  - Did it help you understand the story better when you saw it from one character specifically?
- If you could pick anyone else and read the story from their perspective who do you think it would be? Why? What special view would they bring to the story?
- Do you think something like this could really happen? Why or why not? Do young students often end up solving crimes?
- Are you very observant? Do you keep a log? Name something you noticed that no-one else did.
- What area of science are you most interested in? Forensics combines many different areas like biology, chemistry and physics. You need them all to solve mysteries sometimes.
- What do you think of the forensics log? Does it help the children solve the mystery easier? Have you ever kept anything like the forensics log?
- Take five to ten minutes to research one of the instruments talked about in the novel. Find out one interesting fact about your instrument and take it in turns as a class or small groups to share your fact.

#### Friendship

- Before the story begins, Riz and her friends sit outside school and share 'Did you know' facts. What do you do with your friends before school? Do you change activities depending on who you do things with?
- At the end of the book, Riz gets all her friends forensics logs of their own. She says her friends make her thinking feel normal. Do you have any weird habits your friends make you feel normal about? How important is it to have people you can be yourself around? What do people do to help you feel not weird? Are they supportive? Do they agree?
- How do Riz's friendships develop through this book? She continues to get closer to her original friends but they also add in someone new. Is it hard to add someone new when you've known people forever? How do they change the dynamic? Adding someone new broadens your ideas of the world. What was the last new thing a new friend told you that changed your life?
- Riz's new friend is a little older than her. How can having friends of different ages help us? What changes when a friend is a little older than us? Or younger than us?

### Problem Solving

- Riz and her friends hear that something is missing and want to help solve the problem. Do you ever go out of your way to solve things for people you care about? Does it make them happy or sad? Has anyone ever solved a problem for you? How did that help?
- When you have to solve a problem is it easiest to do it alone or with other people? Why do you think that is? Are teams better at finding solutions? Why?
- As Riz and her friends explore the missing equipment they get told new information about the missing piano and broken guitar. How does this new information adjust their plan? Does it mean they don't need to look at specific things?
- When you have a problem to solve what are the first steps you take? Do you ask for help or do it all yourself? Do you have a specific method? Do big problems and small problems get different steps to solve them? What do you gain from doing your steps to solve problems?

### Confidence

- Would you be confident enough to try to solve a crime like Riz? What does Riz do to help build her confidence and believe in herself further? Is her confidence boosted due to her friends? How might other people, like your friends, help build your confidence?
- Do you think of yourself as a confident person? Why or why not? Are you more confident in different places than others? Why might that be? Does it help when you know more information to make you more confident?
- Are there certain things that make you feel more confident? Riz seems to be gaining confidence with science. Do you have a talent or skill that makes you feel confident? Are they things you do in school or are they things you do outside of school? Why do these things make you feel more confident?

### Mystery

- Re-design the cover for this novel. How could you leave some clues as to what the book would be about? How would you show that the book is a mystery before you read it?
- Think about the mystery genre in books. There are elements such as:
  - A puzzle or mystery that must be solved, such as a crime.
  - Main character, sometimes a detective, who tries to solve the mystery.
  - Suspects, with motives, that you must evaluate.
  - Clues that are more obvious and easy to see (sometimes called 'overt clues').
  - Clues that aren't easy to grasp and can appear as unimportant details (sometimes called 'hidden evidence').
  - Missing information and gaps in the story. (Sometimes these gaps are called 'inference gaps').
  - Suspense is often used to build up the story, raise tension and stakes, and keep the reader gripped.
  - Foreshadowing, which is where an author gives a hint, suggestion or warning about what might happen later in the story. It usually happens at the beginning or earlier section of the story. Sometimes an author uses it to prepare a reader, or to create a twist in the story.
  - Red herring, a type of foreshadowing. This kind of foreshadowing is meant to make a reader come to the wrong conclusion so they can be surprised later, such as thinking one suspect is guilty when it's really another.

Now that you've discussed the different elements of mystery stories, think about *Riz Chester: The Fingerprint Code* and what elements it uses in its story.

- Design your own mystery book or movie and make a cover (remember to leave some clues in the cover). Think about the following questions when creating your own mystery.
  - What was the mystery you created?
  - How will your characters solve the mystery in the end?
  - Would you use any forensics—or maybe even other sciences?

Show your work to a small group and discuss your mysteries together.

- Try to write an alternative clue that would have helped point Riz and her friends in the right direction earlier. Did you notice any early signs that they could have picked up on?

### Science

- Forensics is a blend of lots of different types of science like biology, chemistry, and physics. Consider fingerprints and

how it uses different sciences to analyse the prints. What science would you expect to be most helpful in solving mysteries?

- How do you think that science could have been used to solve this mystery? Would you be able to use it in different mysteries?
- Do you think you would be interested in exploring forensics in the future? Why or why not? Did reading about Riz and her friends solving things with forensics shape your view? What do you think would be the most exciting way to catch someone with forensics?

### ACTIVITIES

- There are three types of fingerprints: loops, whorls and arches. Take the fingerprints of everyone in the class using an ink pad and put them on a poster together. For a couple of minutes analyse the board. Does your class have all three of the types of fingerprints? How many whorls? Arches? And loops? Can you calculate a percentage just like Pieter did? Were some fingerprints harder to distinguish? Were some of them harder to collect? Talk about all the places you could lift fingerprints off of.
  - Take home some ink and paper and fingerprint your family at home. What kind of fingerprints do they have? Are there any similarities between you and your family members or are they all wildly different? Discuss how fingerprints develop.
- One of the below fingerprints is not like the other. Can you identify the types of fingerprints and can you tell which of these was made by a koala? (Answer: first—arch, second—loop, third—koala, fourth—whorl.)

