

AVA SPARK

The Swiftie Mystery



ALEX
FIELD

Illustrated by
JOANNA
BARTEL

TEACHING NOTES

SYNOPSIS

Ava, her family and Australian friend, Liv, are heading to Paris on the Eurostar. It's the mini break of Ava's dreams. For Ava, navigating life in a wheelchair is not always easy. What could possibly go wrong? Soon disaster strikes, and Ava must learn new ways to communicate with her friends as they search for missing Swiftie.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alex Field has written fourteen books. *Ava Spark: Hello, I'm Here!* was longlisted for the 2025 Spark! Book Awards in the Fiction 7+ category in the UK and shortlisted for the 2026 ASLA DANZ awards in the Chapter Book category in Australia. Alex's son used a communication aid much like the one Ava uses to speak. Alex and her son had lots of conversations about really important things, like cricket and food, especially cake. Alex has spent half her life living in Sydney, Australia, and the other half living in London, England. She wishes there was a plane that could take her from London to Sydney in two hours instead of 21 hours!

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Joanna Bartel is an Adelaide Hills-based illustrator with a background in graphic design, copywriting and secondary school Art/Design and English teaching. She draws much of her inspiration from family life with three young kids, experiences in teaching, and childhood memories with three brothers and lots of cousins. Joanna has a particular love for character design and seeks to celebrate both diversity and the minutiae of everyday life in her work.

EDUCATIONAL APPLICABILITY

Ava Spark: The Swiftie Mystery is the second book in the uplifting series featuring school, friendships, and sparky conversations for readers aged 7+. The story continues to follow nearly 11-year old Ava Spark as she navigates the trials and tribulations of home, friendships and school. But this time, she's on her dream mini break in Paris when her communication aid, Swiftie, goes missing. How will she get it back? With determination, good friends and supportive teachers, Ava must learn new ways to communicate with everybody as they search for missing Swiftie. Key themes are diversity, friendship, family ties and determination..

KEY THEMES

1. Communication
2. Paris
3. Gardening
4. Writing a Mystery



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LET'S COMMUNICATE

One of the main themes of the book is COMMUNICATION. What do you think COMMUNICATION means? Being able to communicate is one of the most important skills we need for life. Almost everything we do involves communication – everyday tasks such as learning at school, asking for food and drink, sorting out problems, making friends and having fun.

What do we know about the main character of the book – Ava? Ava talks in a different way to most of you in that she uses a communication aid called an eye gaze machine. She calls this – Swiftie!

Ava's eye gaze machine

Communication aids, also known as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) aids, can help children like Ava communicate in a variety of ways:

Electronic devices: These can be specially designed or a standard computer, tablet, or smartphone with specialist software or apps. Some electronic aids use a computer-generated voice to play messages aloud, while others convert typed text into speech. This is the type of device that Ava has.

Low-tech methods: These include simple communication books with pictures or symbols.

Switches and other control devices: These can be operated by hand, foot, body, head, breath, or eye.

Mounting systems: These can be used to position switches and control devices.

Positioning and support systems: These can help people access the communication aid, especially if they use a wheelchair.

The right communication aid for a person depends on their needs, abilities, and personal preferences. Some people may also combine communication aids with other forms of communication, such as gestures, facial expressions, pictures, and signing.



There are lots of other ways to communicate. Some are listed below:

- Using sign language, for example, British Sign Language (BSL)
- Braille
- Makaton – this uses symbols (pictures), signs (gestures) and speech
- Facial expressions

Choose one form of communication from the ones listed above and **find out** more about it.

OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

Hieroglyphics

Ava's twin sister, Flo, is doing a project on ancient Egypt. The ancient Egyptians communicated with each other using picture writing called hieroglyphics. There were no vowels in the ancient Egyptian alphabet, only 24 hieroglyphs, each standing for different sounds. They could be read from left to right, right to left or top to bottom! The problem was no one knew what they meant. It wasn't until 1799, when the French uncovered a large black slab of stone in Rosetta, Egypt, that a clue to the meanings were found. The Rosetta stone, as it is known, had ancient Greek writing on it and scholars who understood the ancient Greek writing guessed that the hieroglyphs meant the same as the Greek message.

Find out more about hieroglyphics.

Morse Code

Samual Morse invented a code in 1844, using electrical currents along a wire to make signals. Dots and dashes were made using an on-off switch. They stood for different letters and numbers, for example, one dot and one dash is the letter 'a'.

...- - -... This famous Morse code signal spells, 'S.O.S.' (Save our Souls) and is sent by ships in trouble.

Find out more about the Morse Code.

Smoke Signals

Native Americans used smoke to send messages to other tribes (because it was quicker than sending a person with the message). The people on look out could warn the tribe of approaching enemies by sending up a sudden cloud of smoke. Short, fast puffs of smoke meant the enemy was big and well-armed.

Find out more about smoke signals.

Animal Language

It's not just humans who communicate with each other. From dancing to whispering, animals communicate in all sorts of ways. **Find out** how the following animals communicate with each other.

- Whales
- Elephants
- Bees



'Stop getting under my feet,' Mum says.

Flo looks up from the bottom of the stairs.

'It's hard for Ava to get under your feet, as she's in a wheelchair,' Flo responds.

Mum **tuts** and says nothing. I give Flo a **cross** stare, as I don't think it's really the right moment to point this out. Mum, of all people, is very well aware that I'm in a wheelchair.

Flo pulls a **French** dictionary out of her backpack that is leaning by the stairs. It's her new favourite book. Mum got it



PARIS!

Ava goes on her dream mini break – a trip to Paris. She goes to the Eiffel Tower (although she doesn't go up it), passes the Arc de Triomphe and goes to a baking workshop to make madeleines in the Marais quarter. What do you know about Paris? Have you been there?

Put together a fact file about Paris. You might like to think about:

- a map (it's located on the River Seine)
- the different arrondissements (areas)
- important landmarks, for example, the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre Museum, the Arc de Triomphe, etc.
- the food – Paris is famous for its boulangeries, crepes and macarons, to name a few!
- fun or interesting facts – for example, why is it called the City of Light? Go and find out!
- the language – can you say a few words in French?

FACT FILE



DESIGN YOUR OWN GARDEN

Ava and her class are creating their own environmentally friendly garden bed at school. They are planting all sorts of plants and herbs. Have you ever created your own garden? What would you like to plant and grow? Herbs, vegetables, flowers? In the space below design a small garden or garden bed.



IT'S A MYSTERY

The Swiftie Mystery is a great 'mystery' story. Discuss the mystery genre with the class.

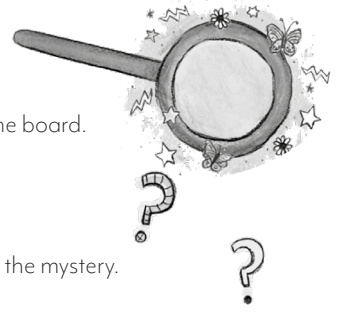
- What is a mystery?
- What are the elements of a good mystery? There's lots to discuss here and maybe you can draw a mind map on the board.

Key elements are:

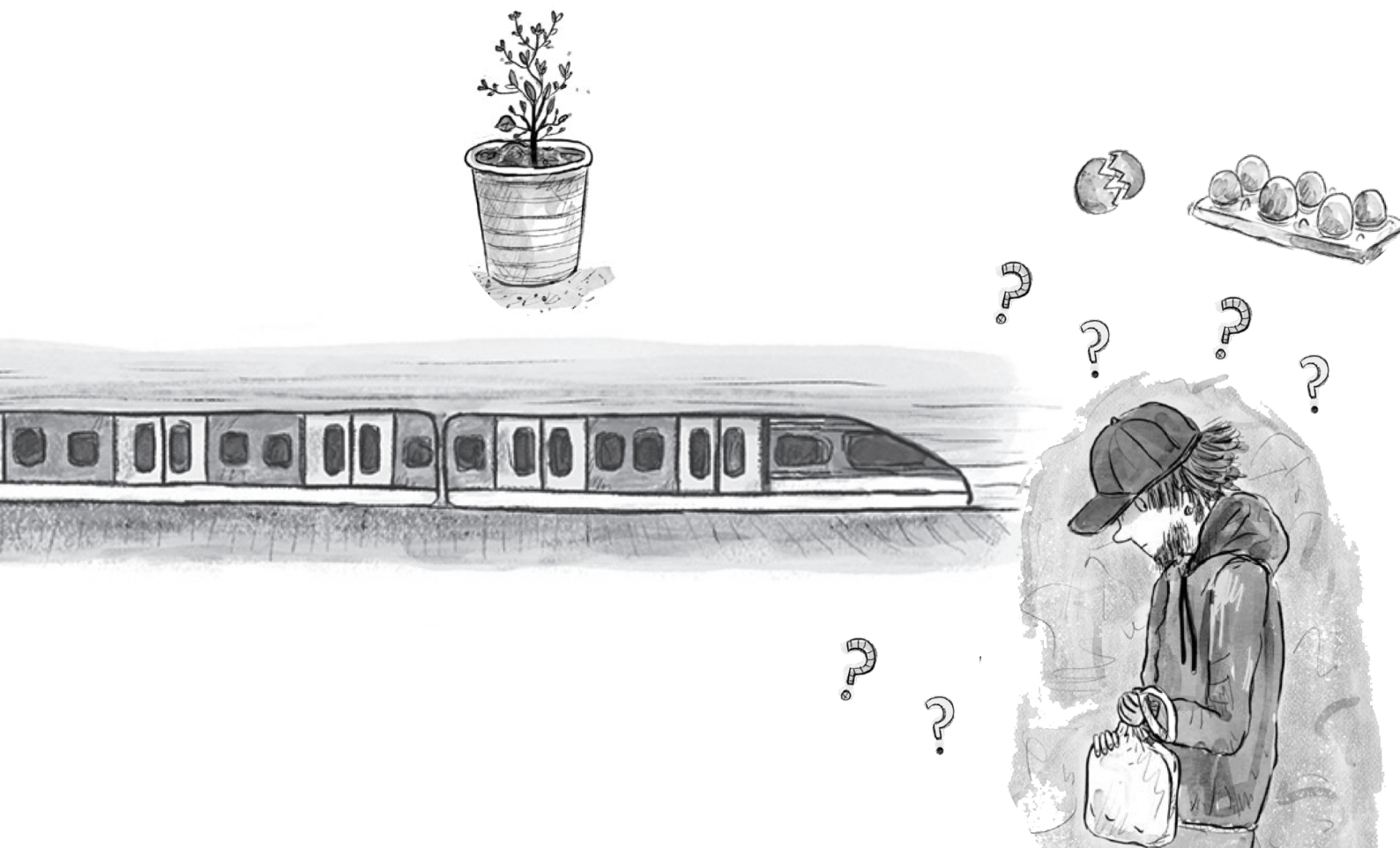
- **A strong hook** – the mystery should intrigue the reader and prompt them to try and put together the clues to solve the mystery.
- **A crime** – this event prompts the investigation and is central to the plot.
- **An investigator** – this is usually the main character of the story, who is determined to solve the crime.
- **A villain** – the perpetrator of the crime. The investigator is usually trying to figure out the villain's identity and their motives.
- **Clues** – a good mystery should have clues peppered throughout the story. An attentive reader might even unravel the mystery before the investigator!

Sometimes a clue can be purposely misleading, taking the investigator and the reader down the wrong path. This is known as 'a red herring'.

- **A twist** – it's exciting for the reader when the mystery leads them somewhere they weren't expecting. A twist at the end of the book can be very effective – just when the story seems to be over, something new and surprising is revealed.
- **A conclusion** – the conclusion should satisfy the reader and unveil the truth. What's the conclusion in this story?



NOW WRITE YOUR OWN MYSTERY STORY!



WORDSEARCH

Find all the words in *The Swiftie Mystery* wordsearch.

Name: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

word search

The Swiftie Mystery

K C A J E S W D R A C V A
Y O G O T F O S R S D E E
T M P M O D R N O H K I H
N M A V A S D E H T A O W
I U R R A F S Z D T T F G
L N I E T P I L H D N S P
L I S P I H S D N E I R F
N C C U I T A A F O T E A
C A H R W B F Y L M E H C
I T O U G H S I U B I C A
O I O O E R V M W N I A O
Y O L F S E U L A S O E S
N N E D R A G R N U V T T

ALBIE
AVA
COMMUNICATION
DEN
FLO
FREDDIE
FRIENDSHIPS

GARDEN
JACK
LIV
MARTHA
MIYA
MUM
OLIVER

PARIS
SCHOOL
SWIFTIE
TEACHERS
TV
WORDS



earch

SOLUTION TO THE WORDSEARCH

Answer Sheet

word search

The Swiftie Mystery

K C A J E S W D R A C V A
Y O G O T F O S R S D E E
T M P M O D R N O H K I H
N M A V A S D E H T A O W
I U R R A F S Z D T T F G
L N I E T P I L H D N S P
L I S P I H S D N E I R F
N C C U I T A A F O T E A
C A H R W B F Y L M E H C
I T O U G H S I U B I C A
O I O O E R V M W N I A O
Y O L F S E U L A S O E S
N N E D R A G R N U V T T

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