



HC: 978-0-7636-2590-0 • PB: 978-0-7636-4952-4  
E-book: 978-0-7636-7410-2  
E-book with audio: 978-0-7636-7141-9  
Also available in audio

## About the Book

Leroy Ninker is a small man with a big dream: he wants to be a cowboy. But for now he's just a thief. In fact, Leroy is robbing the Watsons' kitchen right this minute! As he drags the toaster across the counter—*screeeeeech*—and drops it into his bag—*clannngggg*—little does he know that a certain large pig who loves toast with a great deal of butter is stirring from sleep. Soon a comedy of errors (not to mention the buttery sweets in his pocket) will lead this little man on the wild and raucous rodeo ride he's always dreamed of!



CANDLEWICK PRESS

# Mercy & Watson Fights Crime

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## Common Core Connections

This teachers' guide, with connections to the Common Core, includes an array of activities to accommodate the learning needs of most students in grades K–3. Students are called upon to be careful readers without jeopardizing the pleasure they gain from reading. It is best to allow students to read the entire story before engaging in a detailed study of the work.

Notes throughout the guide correlate the discussion and activities to specific Common Core Standards. For more information on specific standards for your grade level, visit the Common Core website at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

## COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

SL.K-2.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade appropriate topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

SL.K-2.1.A: Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).



W.2.3: Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.



SL.2.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

SL.2.1.A: Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

SL.2.1.B: Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.

SL.2.1.C: Ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion.

## For Discussion

Have students discuss the following questions in pairs, then gather as a class and have a discussion. Focus on the different ideas that are brought up.

When Baby tells Eugenia that she hears a “Yippie-i-oh” sound outside, Eugenia asks if she had been eating pie before bed again (page 34). Why would Eugenia ask such a question? Do you believe that eating before bed will give you nightmares? Why or why not?

Firemen Ned and Lorenzo comment that their job is an interesting one (page 55). What events occurred that would make them say that?

Everyone except Mercy is quoted in the newspaper regarding Mercy’s capture of the thief (pages 67–69). Pretend you are Mercy. What would you say?

## Do You Hear Something? Give Me a Clue

“Screeeeech, went the toaster. . . . Clannngggg, went the toaster” (page 7). The toaster makes noise — a sound Mercy clearly recognizes — when Leroy moves it.

Conduct a lesson on adjectives and onomatopoeia (a word that imitates the sound associated with it). Then pair students up and have them make a list of six things and corresponding adjectives and/or sounds that are clues to what each thing is. Collect the lists and clues, then read the clues aloud and see if classmates can figure out what the things are.

Use this activity as a prelude to a descriptive writing exercise. Ask students to write about a time they heard something and figured out what was happening based only on what they heard.

## Help Is on the Way

The fire and police departments are involved in many of the Mercy Watson books. Here are a few safety-awareness activities you can use with the Mercy books:

Ask students how they would call the police or fire department in an emergency.

Discuss when to call and when *not* to call the fire or police departments. Which instances in the Mercy Watson books were appropriate times to call, and which were not?

Invite a local firefighter or police officer to come to the classroom and speak to the children about the role of their department in the community.

As a homework assignment, have students complete an “In Case of an Emergency” form. Information should include address, phone number, emergency contact, and so on.

## COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

RL.1.3: Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

RL.2.7: Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

L.2.5: Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

## Extra! Read All About It!

Mercy's capture of Leroy Ninker makes the front page of the morning newspaper. Various neighbors and witnesses are quoted in the newspaper article. Hold a class discussion about the elements of journalism and how it differs from fiction. If possible, read aloud some simple news-related stories (classroom newspapers can be a good source). Have students practice becoming journalists by writing their own version of "Pet Pig Captures Thief."

## A Pig by Any Other Name

Mercy gets hailed as a porcine wonder. Ask students if they know what *porcine* means. Explain that it is another word for piglike. Have students define the following terms related to the porcine wonder: *swine*, *hog*, *boar*, *sow*, *gilt*, *piglets*. Children can use any reference material they choose (such as a dictionary or library books). Move the discussion to parts of speech, in particular nouns and verbs. Note that *sow* as a noun refers to a pig, but *sow* as a verb means "to plant." Ask students to cite a similar example from *Mercy Watson Fights Crime* (such as *toast*). Challenge students to find further examples in their reading. As an extension, introduce homophones, words that sound the same but are spelled differently.

## A Cowboy's Dream

Leroy Ninker is described as "a small man with a big dream" (page 4). He dreams of becoming a cowboy. Ask students about their dreams. What would they like to become? Whom do they idolize, and what steps might they need to take to fulfill their dream?

