**The Trouble With Chickens**

**AUTHOR:** Doreen Cronin  
**PUBLISHER:** Balzer + Bray  
**COPYRIGHT DATE:** 2011  
**GENRE:** Humorous Fiction, Mystery Fiction  
**LEXILE:** 570L  

**SUMMARY:**  
Retired search-and-rescue dog J. J. Tully has a new mission: Find Dirt and Sugar, two of Mama Moosh’s missing chicks. As information unfolds, J.J. finds himself in the midst of a mystery where not everything is as it seems.

**BOOKTALK:** Chickens! Missing Chickens! Where could they be?? That’s the question J.J. Tully, former search-and-rescue dog is trying to answer. When he does answer it, a whole new set of problems come up. Can he solve the problems and rescue the two chicks? Will characters like Moosh, Dirt, Sugar, and Vince the Funnel be helpful or stand in his way? Read *The Trouble With Chickens*, the first book in the new J. J. Tully Mystery series, to find out!

**AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:**

**Author’s Name:** Doreen Cronin  
**Author’s Website:** [http://www.doreencronin.com/](http://www.doreencronin.com/)  
**Other books written by the author include:**

- *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*  
- *Diary of a Worm; Diary of a Spider; Diary of a Fly*  
- *Giggle, Giggle, Quack*  
- *Thump, Quack, Moo*  
- *Wiggle; Bounce; Stretch*  
- *Duck For President*

**CHALLENGING WORDS**

- **mirage** (p. 1): *noun* something (such as a pool of water in the middle of a desert) that is seen and appears to be real but that is not actually there.

- **oblivious** (p. 12): *adjective* not conscious or aware of someone or something.

- **tension** (p. 12): *noun* a feeling of nervousness that makes you unable to relax.

- **behooves** (p. 21): *verb* to be necessary or proper for (someone).
rendezvous (p. 21): noun a meeting with someone that is arranged for a particular time and place and that is often secret.

twilight (p. 21): noun the period when day is ending and night is beginning.
quiver (p. 26): verb to shake because of fear, cold, nervousness, etc.
decoy (p. 36): noun a person or thing that attracts people’s attention so they will not notice someone or something else.
inventory (p. 40): noun a list of traits, preferences, attitudes, interests, or abilities used to evaluate personal characteristics or skills.
arrogant (p. 43): adjective having or showing the insulting attitude of people who believe that they are better, smarter, or more important than other people.
lure (p. 79): verb to cause or persuade (a person or an animal) to go somewhere or to do something by offering some pleasure or gain.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did Moosh agree to give J.J. in return for finding her chicks?
2. How would you describe Vince the Funnel? Use evidence from the story to support your claims.
3. The narrator of the story switches for a few chapters. Who are the two narrators of *The Trouble With Chickens*? Why do you think the author switches narrators?
4. Explain Dirt’s plan to rescue J.J., trap Vince, and get all of them out of the house.

ACTIVITIES with COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Language Arts:
- Point of view is an important part of *The Trouble With Chickens*. J.J. narrates most of the book, but Vince also narrates a few chapters. What if one of the chickens were to narrate part of the book? Choose a scene in the book, and
have Moosh, Dirt, Sugar, Poppy, or Sweetie narrate. Remember to stay true to the storyline as you write!

4.RL.6 Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

4.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

4.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

5.RL.6 Describe how a narrator’s or speaker’s point of view influences how events are described.

5.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

5.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

6.RL.5 Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

6.RL.6 Explain how the author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

6.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

6.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

● The Trouble with Chickens is a mystery book. Think about the mystery genre. What are some criteria for a good mystery book? Write an essay explaining why The Trouble With Chickens falls into the mystery genre.

4.RL.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

4.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

5.RL.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

5.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

6.RL.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

6.RL.5 Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of
the theme, setting, or plot.

6.W.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

6.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**LIFE SKILLS:**
Problem Solving
Active Listening
Resourcefulness

**RELATED INTERNET SITES:**
Point of View Worksheets/Reading Worksheets
Various worksheets dealing with point of view.

The Trouble With Chickens - You Tube
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xB0ZrGldiDM
Author Doreen Cronin booktalks her new book on this video, which is set to music and shows some of the illustrations in the book.

Teaching Books.net lesson plan
http://www.teachingbooks.net/tb.cgi?tid=24321

**ACTIVITY SHEET CREATED BY:**
Name: Ellen S. Rempala
Position/Location: Library Media Specialist/Westville Schools