30 Kids Mystery Ideas by Category

Original story starters across 10 mystery categories, plus a short publishing checklist for Amazon KDP, Etsy, and Teachers Pay Teachers.

How to use this list

Each idea is a starting point, not a finished story. Pick a category, take one idea, and ask: who is the detective, what is missing, and what three clues point to the answer? Mix ideas from two categories for a fresh twist.

Adventure Mysteries

1. The bridge that only appears at low tide.
2. A map found inside a hollow tree.
3. A backpack left on a mountain trail.

School Mysteries

4. The chalkboard message that erases itself.
5. A lunchbox that swaps contents every day.
6. The school bell that rings one minute early.

Magical Mysteries

7. A spell book with one page missing.
8. A wand that only works backwards.
9. A friendly ghost who keeps losing its hat.

Nature Mysteries

10. Animal tracks that stop in the middle of a field.
11. A bird nest with a shiny key inside.
12. A river stone that changes color overnight.

Science Mysteries

13. A volcano model that erupts without baking soda.
14. A magnet that sticks to one rock only.
15. A plant that grows toward a hidden window.

Museum Mysteries

16. A painting whose sky changes color.
17. A dinosaur bone that goes missing from the display.
18. A ticket stub from a museum that closed 50 years ago.

Space Mysteries

19. A moon rock that glows when the lights go out.
20. A robot that draws maps of a planet nobody knows.
21. A signal from a satellite that stopped working years ago.

Treasure & Map Mysteries

22. A treasure map drawn on the back of a receipt.
23. A locked box with no keyhole.
24. A compass that points to the schoolyard, not north.

Holiday Mysteries

25. A pumpkin that moves overnight before the fair.
26. A holiday card with no sender and no stamp.
27. A string of lights that spells a word.

Everyday Mysteries

28. A bicycle bell that rings when nobody touches it.
29. A cookie jar that is never empty.
30. A sock that disappears from every laundry load.

Publishing checklist — from finished book to sale

- ■ Read the story aloud once — fix anything a child stumbles on.
- ■ Check every clue appears before the solution.
- ■ Add illustration prompts for each scene (cover + 3–5 inside pages).
- ■ Export a print-ready PDF and check the page count (30 pages is a good target).
- ■ Write a short description: detective, mystery, age range, page count.
- ■ Publish on Amazon KDP, Etsy, or Teachers Pay Teachers — check each platform's rules first.
- ■ Keep your commercial license receipt with your files.

Made by Pickzox as a free companion to the MysteryQuest Kids AI review. All 30 idea starters above are original and free to use in your own books.