The Web Files
written by Margie Palatini • illustrations by Richard Egielski

DUM DE DUM DUM

This is the farm.
Quiet. Peaceful.
Full of chickens,
horses, ducks, sheep,
and intrigue.

Yes. Intrigue.

Someone has pilfered a peck of almost-pickled peppers.
Ducktective Web and his partner, Bill, are hot on the tail of the pepper pincher, but this could be a hard case to quack.
They’ve got Jack Horner cornered, but will Little Boy Blue’s alibi hold up?

Meanwhile ... vegetables keep vanishing all over the farm.

Just the facts, Ma’am. Just the facts.

“... a Pullet Surprise.”
School Library Journal, STARRED REVIEW

“... a stylized treat.”
Booklist, BOXED REVIEW

“The best barnyard adventure since Old MacDonald took inventory.”
The Horn Book Magazine

“Paced breathlessly ... outrageous silliness.”
Kirkus

“It’s fast-paced, it’s witty, and it’s entertaining!”
Ruth Cullam, 8+1 Traits of Writing
A Note from Margie’s Files:

The Web Files is a PARODY of the old TV Show: DRAGNET
I used to watch it all the time with my dad.
Check it out and see and hear “Detective Joe Friday”, and learn about the INSPIRATION for my book -- THE WEB FILES, and the character, “Ducktective Web”, created by actor, Jack Webb.

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http://www.veoh.com/collection/nostalgiam-tvshows/watch/v16949457wHejb6kb

NURSERY RHYME REVIEW:
The story has references to several nursery rhyme characters:
Little Miss Muffet, Little Boy Blue, Little Jack Horner, The Three Little Kittens, Peter Piper.

TEACHING THE TRAITS:
These are activity suggestions for using THE WEB FILES
from Ruth Cullam’s book: 6 + 1 TRAITS of WRITING

• SENTENCE FLUENCY: Some sentences are short. Blunt. To the point.
While others are longer, with more adjectives, and more detail. Have students note the rhythm and tempo of the writing. Activity: make a graph of the word or sentence lengths; Practice writing sentences of different lengths. Add adjectives and adverbs to lengthen, remove to shorten.

• ALLITERATION and IDIOMS: Identify the use of alliteration and idioms throughout the book. Discuss WHY they are used, and HOW they are humorous.

• QUOTATION MARKS and ELLIPSES: The book is chock full of dialogue, and uses ellipses to suggest dramatic pauses and pacing. Discuss and then have students write their own scene from The Web Files with the ducktectives interviewing another nursery rhyme or fairy tale character.
HARDBOILED DUCKTECTIVE VOCABULARY

Here are some definitions of words and phrases in the book, to help better understand and enjoy the humor of the story.

shift: policemen work in scheduled time frames called ‘shifts’. example: night shift
suspect: a person the police think may be involved in a crime.
‘feathers are flying’: a ruckus; a fight, disturbance.
“let’s fly”: let’s move fast. (note how Richard Egielski adds to the humor.)
pilfered, pinched, picked: Alliterative SYNONYMS for ‘steal’.
‘headquarters was hopping’: busy; (look for the rabbits Richard Egielski illustrated for a visual play on words.)
‘bedtime story’: in this case, ‘Web’ uses the phrase to suggest a ‘made up story’.

(Why do you think I used that phrase here in the story?)

‘make hay’: time to get it done; (in this story - to ‘talk’.)
witness: to see something happening.
‘looked black’: situation is not good.
‘put out to pasture’: let go.
‘hightailed’: ran away quickly.
‘What’s up, Duck?’: a spoof of Bugs Bunny’s ‘What’s up, Doo?’
‘rash of recent robberies’: many instances in a short time.
‘hole-in-the-wall’: not a very nice place.
snitch: tattletale
smirking: a smug smile.
‘can it’: be quiet. (note the line that follows. Why is this funny?)
flatfoot: a slang term used for a policeman who walks a beat.
(humorous use because ducks have flat feet)
‘clean’: no evidence to link the suspect to the crime.
‘pin this rap’: get arrested; charge with the crime.
vegetable vagrancy: stealing vegetables.
offensive: odorous; not a pleasant smell.
‘sent up the river’: go to jail.
convicted: found guilty.
sentence: punishment by the judge and court.
Reader’s Theater: Based on the Book:

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DUM DE DUM DUM

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

DUCKTECTIVE WEBB: Hardboiled, fedora-wearing farm crime fighter

BILL: Web’s partner

P. Hen: Her purple pickled peppers are reported missing

Gentleman Horse: His tub of tasty tart tomatoes was taken

Madam Sheep: Her leafy lettuce has been lifted

Patrolman Rooster: The farm is his beat

His Honor, Judge B. E. Goat

THE USUAL SUSPECTS:

Little Boy Blue
Little Jack Horner
That Dirty Rat

CHORUS OF FARM ANIMALS & NURSERY RHYME CHARACTERS
Chorus: **DUM DE DUM DUM**

This is **THE FARM**.

**Web**: 6:32 A.M.
My partner, Bill
and I were working
the barnyard shift.

It was peaceful. Quiet. Then we got the call.

**Rooster**: **COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO**!

A lot of **SQAWKING** going down in the coop area
Ducktective Web. Looks like **FOWL PLAY**.
Chief says we should check out the chicks.

**Web**: Chicks?

**Rooster**: Check.

**Web**: (to Bill) Let’s fly.

Chorus: **DUM DE DUM DUM DUM**
Web: 6:35 A.M.
The Hen’s house.

We knocked on the door.
She answered.

Hen: P’AWK! P-P-P-AWK! P’AWK! P’AWK! P’AWK!

Web: Just the facts, Ma’am. Just the facts.

Hen: I’ve been robbed! Robbed, I tell you! Robbed! Robbed! ROBBED!

Web: So ... you’re saying that you were robbed, is that right, Ma’am?

Bill: What exactly is missing from the nest, Ma’am. Eggs, Ma’am?
    Chicks, Ma'am?

Hen: P-p-p-p-peppers.

Bill: Peppers?

Hen: My perfect purple peppers that were just about ready to be pickled.

Web: About how many perfect purple almost-pickled peppers would you say were filfered, pinched, and picked? ... A BUSHEL?

Hen: P’AWK! P’AWK! No, --- a PECK! a PECK, I tell you!
    A whole purple-pepper-pickin’ peck!
Web: Have any idea who would pick a peck of your perfect purple almost-pickled peppers?

Hen: Not a clue.

Web: I turned to Bill and gave a quick quack. Round up the usual suspects.

Chorus: **DUM DE DUM DUM**

Web: 9:06 A.M. Headquarters was hopping.

A miss named Muffet had just been tossed off her tuffet, and a gal named Peep was missing some sheep.

Bill: We noticed three little kittens had lost their mittens.

Web: They began to cry.
I wanted to help.
I couldn’t.
I had pickled peppers to worry about.
Web: We had Horner in the corner, and were trying to make Little Boy Blue quack.

Okay, Blue Boy. Quit blowing your horn. Time to make hay. Suppose you just tell me where you were this morning.

Boy Blue: I’m innocent I tell you! INNOCENT! I was under the haystack fast asleep! Honest! Ask anybody.

Web: Sure. Sure. I’ve heard that bedtime story before. Got any witnesses?

Bill: (shakes his head) No. The sheep were in the meadow. Cows in the corn.

Web: Things looked black for the boy in blue. And then ... we got another call.

Bill: There’s been some horsin’ around reported down near Barn and Pen. Looks like another robbery.

Web: We put the kid out to pasture.

Chorus: DUM DE DUM DUM DUM
Web: 10:43 A.M.
Corner of Barn and Pen.

Bill and I talked to
the horses ...

WHOA! WHOA! You there.
Like to ask you a few questions if you don't mind, sir.

Horse: Na-a-a-ay. Not at all.

Web: What do you know about a peck of unlawfully picked perfect purple
almost-pickled peppers?

Horse: Peppers? Peppers? A peck of purple peppers?
Not a thing.
But somebody just HIGHTAILED it out of here with
a tub of my tartest tasty tomahtoes.

Web: Tomatoes?

Horse: You say TOE-MAY-TOES ...
I say TOE-MAH-TOES ... But
somebody just hauled the whole thing off!
Sheep: And find my lettuce while you’re at it too!
Somebody just lifted a load of my luscious leafy lettuce
not just ten minutes ago! This is ba-a-a-ad. Really ba-a-a-ad!

Bill: (scratching head) Peppers? ... Tomatoes? ... Lettuce? ...
What do you make out of all of this, Web?

Web: There was only ONE THING to make out of all of this ... SALAD!

Chorus: DUM DE DUM DUM

Web: 11:47 A.M.
The Squad Room.

My partner and I were still trying to quack the case, but we didn’t
have any idea whom to I.D.

Bill: Rats.

Web: THAT’S IT!
There was only ONE SUSPECT who was sneaky enough, wily enough,
and tricky enough to pick a peck of perfect purple almost-pickled
peppers, take a tub of tasty tart tomatoes, and lifted a load of
luscious leafy lettuce ...

Web: 12:22 P.M.
My partner and I were hot on the tail of ... THAT DIRTY RAT.

Chorus: DUM DE DUM DUM
Web: 12:26 P.M
   A real hole-in-the-wall.

   We know you’re holed up in there, you Dirty Rat. Let us in.

Bill: He did.

RAT: Eh ... what’s up, Duck?

Web: There’s been some trouble down on the farm.
   What do you know about a rash of recent robberies?

Rat: (innocently) Robberies? Robberies? What makes you think I know ANYTHING about a robbery? I’m no CHEESY SNITCH.

Web: Can it Ratzo. You’ve been in nothing but garbage for years.

Rat: (grinning) Okay. Sure. Sure. Go ahead, FLATFOOT.
   Look ANYWHERE you want ... But make it quick, Quacker.
   You’re interrupting my lunch.

Web: LUNCH, eh, Rodent?

Rat: Hey! What’s going on here?
   You’re not going to pin this rap on me!
   Where’s your evidence,
   you waddling webfoot?
   You got NOTHING on Me. NOTHING, SEE?
   I’m CLEAN! CLEAN, I tell you! CLEAN!
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Web: I picked a piece of lettuce
from under his chin.
NOT CLEAN ENOUGH, you Dirty Rat.
I smelled his breath. Just as I suspected.
Garlic mayo.
Book him, Ducko! His salad days are over.

Rat: Over? OVER! But, they CAN'T be OVER!
I haven't even had my DESSERT!

Bill: Looks like you quacked another one, Web.
But, how did you ever figure out it was him?

Web: Just played a HUNCH
he ate the evidence for LUNCH ...
and forgot to use his napkin
and brush his teeth.
He's a DIRTY RAT.
He never did have good hygiene.

Chorus: DUM DE DUM DUM
**Judge:** The DIRTY RAT was tried and convicted on three counts of vegetable vagrancy, offensive bad breath ... AND ... not using a napkin to wipe under his chin.

He was sent up the river and was sentenced to six months of farm labor, with time off for good behavior, better table manners ... and clean teeth.

**Web:** Case Closed.

**Chorus:**

**DUM DE DUM DUM**

**DUM DE DUM DUM**

**DUM**