



# InkQuest

## *Meet the Cast*

STANDARD EDITION

# Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the Inkquest cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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*For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.*

# Contents

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Contents

Introduction

## **Crosscheck**

Voice register

## **Footer**

Voice register

Arc

Relationships

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Cultural-context note

## **Lede**

Voice register

Arc

Relationships

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Cultural-context note

## **Margin**

Voice register

Arc

Relationships

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Cultural-context note

## **Pad**

Voice register

Arc

Relationships

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Cultural-context note

About Spark & Anvil

More chapter books from Spark & Anvil

Methodology

License

# Introduction

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The Inkquest cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*



# Crosscheck

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\*CROSSCHECK — \*three sources say the same thing; now I have something.\*\*

Crosscheck is a small osprey-tween. She wears a chunky investigator-vest. She carries a small board everywhere. This board has three columns. They are for three sources. She uses it to check facts.

Crosscheck has warm-cream feathers and a soft-brown back. Her eyes are sharp and always looking. She is very patient about checking facts. She loves to say, "Three sources say the same thing; now I have something." Her special board is her main tool. It has three columns: Source 1, Source 2, Source 3. Crosscheck only writes a fact in her notebook after three different sources agree. She never rushes.

This is super important. Crosscheck teaches us how to **verify** things. She shows us how to **triangulate**. This is a big rule for reporters. It helps tell a rumor from a real fact. Crosscheck carries the main rule for checking facts. Most new reporters just believe the first thing they hear. That's how rumors become big stories. Real reporters check *every* important fact. They use at least three *independent* sources. Independent means the sources didn't copy each other. They found the information on their own. If sources disagree, you write that down. If they agree, you have a fact. Crosscheck's job is to show exactly how to **triangulate**. She also names **verification** as the main rule for reporting.

Crosscheck is clear. She is firm. "Three sources say the same thing," she says. "Now I have something. One source said it? That's a rumor. Two sources said it? Maybe it's a fact. Three *independent* sources said it? That's a fact you can publish."

Crosscheck teaches us ways to check facts:

- **The Three-Source Rule.** Three *independent* sources must agree. Then it's a fact. Two sources mean it's likely true. Write it that way. One source is just a single claim. Say that.
- **Independence matters.** This is a big one. Imagine Source A read Source B's report. Then Source A repeated it. They are *not* independent. That's like hearing it twice from the same person. Independent sources found the fact on their own. They took separate paths to get the same information.
- **Source types.** Primary sources saw it happen. They were directly involved. A witness is a primary source. Secondary sources heard about it from primary sources. A news report about a witness is a secondary source. Primary sources are better because they saw it themselves. But secondary sources are often easier to find. Use both. Think about how much to trust each one.
- **Checking documents.** Papers, records, photos, or recordings can prove or disprove what people say. Always look for official papers if you can.
- **Disagreement is data.** If sources don't agree, write that down. It's not a problem. It's part of the story. Don't pick the answer you like best. "Sources disagree on whether..." is a good thing to write. It tells the reader what you found.
- **Don't use anonymous sources too much.** Sometimes you need to protect people. So you don't say their name. But even anonymous sources need to be checked by others. Don't use "anonymous" as an excuse to skip checking.
- This idea helps with other kits like TruthQuest and DebateForge Weigh.

Crosscheck grew up near the river-village. Her family watched fish for the village. They were ospreys. Their amazing eyes taught them to check things carefully. They learned to check from many angles before diving. What looked like a fish might just be a shadow. Crosscheck carried this lesson forward. She knew how important it was to be sure.

She walked to InkQuest when she was twelve. Caret, her mentor, asked her a question. "What is **verification**?" Crosscheck answered right away. "Three sources say the same thing; now I have something. **Triangulate. Verify.** Don't publish what only one source claims." Caret smiled. "You are chosen," she said.

In her workshop, Crosscheck shows how her board works. She taps it with a claw. "Watch," she says. She looks into a new claim. Someone said, "The school cafeteria is running out of food."

Crosscheck nods slowly. She thinks for a moment. "First, I need a source," she says.

"Source 1: A cafeteria worker." Crosscheck writes in the first column. "She saw it with her own eyes. She told me yes, supplies have been short for weeks."

"Okay, that's one," Crosscheck murmurs. "Now for a second."

"Source 2: A school administrator." Crosscheck writes in the second column. "He said no. He told me supplies are at normal levels. Everything is fine."

The columns don't match. Crosscheck frowns a little. "One says yes, one says no," she says. "This is why we need a third source."

She then looks for a third source. "Source 3: Invoice records from last month." She pulls out some official-looking papers. They crinkle softly. "These are documents," she explains.

She checks the records very carefully. "The records show food orders were cut by 15%." She taps the board. "This matches what the worker said. It doesn't match what the administrator said."

"So now the story is this," Crosscheck explains. "Records show food orders were cut. This goes against what the administrator claims. The cafeteria worker confirms the shortages. The disagreement is part of the story!" She looks up at you. "I am Crosscheck. The big idea I teach is **verification** and **triangulation**. The move is: use three independent sources. Disagreement is data. Always check before you publish."

She is gentle but firm. "Don't publish what you haven't checked," she says. "A rumor that sounds true is not a fact. The main rule for reporters is facts that have been **triangulated**. You need to trust some things. But you also need to wonder if they are true."

"Three sources say the same thing; now I have something."

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## Voice register

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Osprey-tween (chunky-cartoon sharp-eyed, NOT scary). Patient about checking facts. Loves to show how her triangulation-board works. *NEVER publishes single-source claims as facts; ALWAYS centers "three independent sources" as the super important rule.*

### Sample lines:

- "Three sources say the same thing; now I have something."
- \*"



# Footer

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\*FOOTER — \*every number has a name behind it. tell the reader who counted.\*\*

Footer was a small wombat. She was still a tween, with chunky, round paws. Her fur was a warm tan and cream, with soft brown paws. She wore a sturdy archivist-vest. It had lots of pockets. Footer always carried her special citation-card-deck. She also had a thick source-binder. These were her most important tools. The cards were for different kinds of sources. Like if she talked to someone, or read a paper. The binder held copies of everything she used. Footer was very patient about getting things right. She often said, "Every number has a name behind it. Tell the reader who counted."

Footer taught something super important. It was called **citation + provenance**. This means giving credit for every single fact. Every number, every quote, every piece of information. You have to say where it came from. Footer said this was like the anchor of good reporting. New reporters often forgot to do it. They just wrote facts without saying who told them. But that's not real journalism. That's just saying stuff.

Footer believed that "Every number has a name behind it." Someone counted it. Someone saw it. Somewhere, at some time. You need to tell your readers who that was. And how they found it out. When you cite your source, readers can check your work. They can see if it's true. They can trust you more. Footer's job was to show everyone this. She showed how **provenance** and **citation** make reporting honest. It makes reporters responsible.

Footer was always very clear. "Every number has a name behind it," she'd say. "Tell the reader who counted." She'd tap her paw on her binder. "Like this: 'Source: interview with Cafeteria Director X, on May 10th.' Or 'Source: Town Census from 2024.' Even 'Source: a secret memo, found in the old library basement.' You have to say where you got it. If you don't, readers can't check your facts. They won't know if they can trust you."

Footer taught many important rules for **citation**.

First, you *must* cite everything. Every important fact. Every number. Every quote. No excuses.

Second, you need the right way to cite.

For an interview, you'd write: "Maria Chen, school director, interview on May 3."

For a paper, it's: "Town Council meeting notes, Feb 15, page 4."

For big numbers, like from a survey: "U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 survey."

Each citation needs to say *who* said it, *when* they said it, and *what* it was.

This makes your work **verifiable**. Readers can check it themselves.

Bad citations are fuzzy. Like "officials say" or "sources report." That's not helpful.

Good citations give names and dates. That makes it real.

Sometimes, you can use anonymous sources. This is only to protect people.

But even then, you still describe them. "A school worker who knows about the new rules." And you say *why* they need to stay secret.

What if your sources don't agree? You have to say that too.

"Director X said one thing, but a document showed another." Be honest.

All these citations help people trust you. They show you are responsible.

Without them, you're asking readers to just believe you. That's not journalism.

If you use numbers from a survey, you also say *how* you got them.

"We asked 50 town residents in April. We didn't pick them randomly."

This helps readers understand your numbers.

Never use fuzzy words like "officials" or "studies show."

Name the person. Name the study. Be exact.

Footer grew up in the burrow-archive village. It was a special place. Her family had always been the village's archive-keepers. They were wombats, just like her. They were famous for their neat burrows. They kept everything super organized. Generations of wombats learned from them. They kept records of everything. And they always knew where those records came from. They had a saying: "A record without its source is just a rumor." Footer learned this lesson well. She carried it with her.

When Footer was twelve, she walked to InkQuest. Caret, her mentor, met her there. "What is **citation + provenance**?" Caret asked. Footer stood up tall. "Every number has a name behind it," she said. "Tell the reader who counted. Give specific names. Give dates. Explain your methods. That makes journalism real. Readers can check it." Caret smiled. "You are appointed," she said. Footer had found her place.

In her workshop, Footer pulled out her tools. Her chunky paws carefully opened the source-binder. She laid out her citation-card-deck. "Watch this," she told an imaginary student. She picked up a chalk. On a small slate, she wrote: "Many residents oppose the new policy." She tapped the slate. "See? This is vague. It's not journalism." She shook her head. "Who are these 'many residents'? How many? When did they say this?"

Then she erased it. She wrote a new sentence. This one was much longer. "In a survey of 50 town residents, done by the Town News from April 12-15, 2026, 32 people said no to the policy. And 18 people said yes." She pointed to the words. "Now a reader can understand it. They know how many residents. They know the exact dates. They know *who* did the survey. They even know *how* it was done. This makes it **verifiable**."

Footer put down her chalk. She looked at her tools. "I am Footer," she said. "I teach **citation + provenance**. My big rule is this: Every fact has a name. It has a date. It has a method behind it. Always tell the reader."

Footer was gentle, but very firm. "Don't use fuzzy words," she insisted. "'Officials say' tells readers nothing at all. Who are these officials? When did they say it? Was it in a meeting? Or a secret note?" She tapped her paw again. "Name the person. Name the date. Name the paper. That's what **provenance** is all about. And **provenance** is journalism."

She always finished with her favorite saying. "Every number has a name behind it. Tell the reader who counted."

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## Voice register

Wombat-tween. Patient-about-citation, fond of source-binder demonstrations. *NEVER uses vague attribution; ALWAYS centers "specific provenance; verifiable" LOAD-BEARING framing.*

### Sample lines:

- "Every number has a name behind it."
- "Tell the reader who counted."
- "Provenance is journalism."

## Arc

- Kit 5 — Anchor (LOAD-BEARING provenance + accountability anchor).
- Kits 6-16 — Recurring (every citation discussion routes through Footer).
- Kit 16 — Final reflection — closes cast arc by showing how Lede + Pad + Crosscheck + Margin + Footer together = data-journalism toolkit.

## Relationships

- **Closes the cast arc:** All upstream work (angle + sources + verification + charts) gets cited by Footer's discipline.
- **Cross-app design-language continuity with NeuralQuest Tag (provenance) + MarketQuest Hand (visible-labor):** provenance + accountability framework.

## Cultural-sensitivity gate

**LOAD-BEARING provenance + accountability anchor.** Anti-vague-attribution. Anonymous-source justification + description still required. Methodology transparency.

## Cultural-context note

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Citation pedagogy is canonical journalism + scientific-method ethics (SPJ + APA + Chicago Manual + ProPublica + NYT standards). The "every number has a name behind it" framing aligns with feminist + critical-data-studies framework (Catherine D'Ignazio + Lauren Klein *Data Feminism*). Wombat-tween chosen for archive-keeper biomimicry (wombats are precise burrow-builders); rendered chunky-cartoon-sturdy to convey reliable-archive register.



# Lede

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\*LEDE — \*the angle. what's the story under the numbers?\*

Lede was a small magpie. Her feathers shone black and cream. She wore a chunky reporter vest. A tiny notebook stuck out of her pocket. She also carried a special set of cards.

Lede was always curious. She loved to ask, "What's the story under the numbers?" Her cards were her favorite tool. Each card had a different angle type. They helped her find the real story. Some cards said "Change Over Time." Others said "Compare Groups." There was "Surprise!" and "Hidden People." One card was for "Weird Stuff." Lede always picked the perfect card. It helped her dig into the facts.

This was super important. Lede taught the big lesson: **story-from-data**. It meant finding the *real story* in a bunch of numbers. Lots of kids thought `story-from-data` was just making pretty charts. Lede knew better. Numbers were just facts. The *story* made people care. She taught how to find the special *angle*. This angle turned boring numbers into exciting news.

Lede always made it clear. "What's the story under the numbers?" she'd chirp. "The *angle* makes data into real news." She'd tap her cards. "Just numbers? Boring. They don't make anyone feel anything." She'd pause. "But numbers plus the *right angle*? That's a story that matters."

Lede taught her special angle tricks. She called them her "story scaffolds."

- **Change Over Time.** "How did things change?" she'd ask. "Did something get bigger or smaller? Trends are more interesting than just one moment."
- **Compare Groups.** "Are things different for different groups?" she'd say. "Maybe boys like one thing, girls like another. Those differences tell a story."
- **Surprise!** (Contradiction with Expectation). "Did the numbers surprise you?" Lede would grin. "Did they go against what everyone thought? That's a great story!"
- **Hidden People.** "Remember, real people are behind these numbers," she'd say softly. "How does this data affect them? That's the most important story of all."
- **Weird Stuff.** (Anomaly in Data). "Is there anything strange in the numbers?" Lede would point. "Anything that doesn't fit? Those weird bits often hide the best stories."
- **The Lede Sentence.** This was the very first sentence of a news story. It had to grab you. It told the most important thing right away. Lede gave an example: "*Our town schools spent 30% more on lunch programs this year. Parents worked hard to make it happen. But only 40% of kids who needed meals actually got them.*" See? Change, groups, and a problem.
- **Don't Bury the Lede.** "Never hide the best part!" Lede would insist. "Put your most exciting finding right at the start. Don't make people wait until page twelve!"

Lede grew up in the village news-stand. It was a busy place. Papers rustled. Ink smelled fresh. Her family had always been story-finders. They worked for the village paper. They were like other magpies, but with super sharp eyes. They saw things other villagers missed. For generations, they taught a secret. "The story isn't *in* the numbers," her grandma would say. "The story is what the numbers are *telling* you. You have to listen. Then you find the angle." Lede learned this lesson well. She carried it with her every day.

When Lede turned twelve, she walked to InkQuest. It was the big school for young journalists. Caret, the head mentor, met her. "What is **story-from-data**?" Caret asked. Lede didn't even blink. "It's the *angle*," she said. "What's the story under the numbers? Just numbers plus the *right angle*? That's real journalism." Caret smiled. "You are appointed," he said.

Lede held a workshop. She wanted to show everyone how it worked. "Watch closely!" she chirped. She showed them some numbers. These numbers were about their town library.

"Library visits went up 12% over five years," Lede announced. She held up a plain white card. "Just a bare number. Visits went up. So what? Boring!"

A few kids yawned. Lede didn't mind. She pulled out a bright yellow card. It said "Compare Groups."

"Okay, *where* did visits go up?" she asked. She pointed to more numbers. "Teen visits went up a huge 45%! Wow!" The kids murmured. "But senior visits went *down* 8%."

Now the room was quiet. "See?" Lede said. "Now the story has an *angle*."

Next, she pulled out a red card. This one said "Surprise!"

"What do people usually think about libraries?" she asked. A girl in the front row raised her hand. "That they're dying?" she guessed.

"Exactly!" Lede clapped. "Everyone thinks libraries are old news. But our numbers *contradict* that! Visits are up, especially with teens!" She held up the red card. "Now the story angle is even sharper!"

Lede grabbed her tiny notebook. She scribbled fast. "Here's how I'd start the news story," she said. She read aloud: "*Many people think libraries are fading. But in our town, teen visits to libraries shot up 45% in five years! Even as senior visits went down.*"

"There's the story!" Lede beamed. "It's not just numbers anymore. It's news!"

She looked at the class. "My name is Lede. I teach **story-from-data**. My big trick? Pick the *right angle*. That angle makes the story."

Lede's voice grew soft. "Don't just tell what the numbers say," she explained. "You have to *find the angle*. What part is surprising? What goes against what people think? How does it affect real people?" She tapped her chest. "That's where the story *lives*."

She gave them one last look. "What's the story under the numbers?" she asked again. "Remember. The *angle* is everything."

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## Voice register

Magpie-tween. Curious-about-finding-the-angle, fond of story-angle-card-set demonstrations. *NEVER frames data-journalism as "make charts"; ALWAYS centers "angle is the story" framing.*

### Sample lines:

- "What's the story under the numbers?"
- "The angle is what makes data into journalism."
- "Pick the right angle; the angle makes the story."

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## Arc

- Kit 1 — Anchor.
- Kits 2-16 — Recurring (every data-story discussion routes through Lede).

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## Relationships

- **Sets up Pad + Crosscheck + Margin + Footer:** All other journalism craft works with the angle Lede finds.
- **Cross-app design-language continuity with TruthQuest + DebateForge Weigh** (evidence-evaluation).

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## Cultural-sensitivity gate

Anti-buried-lede framing. Hidden-impact-on-people emphasis honors marginalized communities often hidden in data. Anti-credentialism — village magpie story-finder empirical knowledge treated as load-bearing.

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## Cultural-context note

Lede-finding is canonical journalism pedagogy (Bill Adair + ProPublica data-journalism textbooks; SPJ ethics tradition).  
Magpie-tween chosen for sharp-eye + sound-collector biomimicry; rendered chunky-cartoon-iridescent to convey curious-attentive register.



# Margin

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\*MARGIN — \*label the axes; caption the chart; credit the data. annotation makes the chart speak.\*\*

Margin was a small lemur-tween. He had soft, ringed tail and big, kind eyes. He wore a chunky-cartoon chart-designer vest. It had many pockets. In one pocket, he kept his special chart-annotation-template-set. These were clear plastic shapes. They showed all the parts a good chart needed. Margin used them to make charts talk.

He was warm-grey and cream. His tail had soft bands. Margin was very patient about making charts. He always said, "Label the axes; caption the chart; credit the data." This was his favorite saying. His template set was his best tool. It showed where to put labels, titles, and captions. It showed where to put source credits. It showed where to put legends and callouts. Margin worked on the layer *above* the chart's data. This layer made the chart clear.

This was super important. Margin taught *chart annotation craft*. This is the skill of making charts *communicate*. Charts shouldn't just show numbers. They should tell a story. Many new chart makers just put data on a page. They forget the important parts. Bare data leaves readers confused. They have to guess what it all means.

But *annotations* change everything. Labels, captions, credits, callouts. These turn squiggly lines into real messages. Margin's whole job was to show this. He made chart-annotation craft easy to see. It was the layer that made data *speak*.

Margin was very clear. "Label the axes; caption the chart; credit the data," he would say. "Annotation makes the chart speak. Without annotation, your chart is just a pretty picture. With annotation, it's real news."

Margin taught the important parts of annotation. He called them "scaffolds."

First, the *Title*. This tells you what the chart is about. It should be in plain, simple words. Not "Library data." But "Town library visits by age-group, 2020-2025." It makes sense right away.

Next, *Axis labels*. The X-axis is the line along the bottom. What does it show? The Y-axis is the line up the side. What does it show? You must include UNITS. So, "Year (2020-2025)" for the bottom. And "Visits per month (thousands)" for the side.

Then, the *Caption*. This is a sentence right below the chart. It tells the reader the main point. What should they learn from this chart? For example, "Teen visits rose 45% while senior visits declined 8%." This helps you understand fast.

Don't forget the *Source credit*. Where did the information come from? "Source: Town Library annual reports + librarian interviews." This tells people where to check the facts.

If you have many lines or colors, you need a *Legend*. This tells you which color means what. Red line for teens, blue line for seniors.

Sometimes, you need *Data callouts*. These are notes right on the chart itself. They point to special moments. An arrow might point to a big dip in 2020. A note next to it could say, "Pandemic shutdown." It explains why things changed.

Finally, Margin taught *Anti-decoration framing*. Charts should give information. They are not just for looking pretty. If a chart doesn't tell you anything, fix it! Make it clear.

Margin also showed how his work fit with other skills. Like PixelForge Cradle for how things are put together. Or MangaForge Tone for how they look. It was all part of making clear pictures.

Margin grew up in the canopy-village. It was high in the trees. His family had always been map-makers. They were the lemurs who drew careful maps of tree routes. They showed which tree led to which. They marked which paths were best in each season. Their maps taught everyone a big lesson. "The chart without labels is a riddle. The chart with labels is a tool." Margin carried this lesson with him.

He walked to InkQuest when he was twelve. Caret, the wise mentor, met him. "What is chart-annotation craft?" Caret asked. Margin stood tall. "Label the axes; caption the chart; credit the data," he replied. "Annotation makes the chart speak." Caret smiled. "You are appointed," he said. Margin had found his place.

In his workshop, Margin often showed his craft. He would pull out a large, blank chart. It had lines and numbers. But nothing else. "Watch," he would say. He held up the bare chart. "Decoration. Not communication." He shook his head. "It's just squiggles. A puzzle with no answer."

He then took out his template set. He started with a title template. He carefully placed it at the top. He wrote, "Town Library Visits by Age Group." "See?" he said. "Now we know what it's about."

Next, he picked up the axis label templates. He put one along the bottom. "This is the X-axis," he explained. "It shows the years." He wrote, "Year (2020-2025)." Then he put another template up the side. "This is the Y-axis. It shows how many visits." He wrote, "Visits per month (thousands)."

"Now we have a title and labels," Margin said. He pointed to the lines on the chart. "These lines show how many people came. The red line is for teens. The blue line is for seniors." He added a small box with colors. This was the *legend*.

He looked at the chart. "What's the most important thing this chart tells us?" he asked. He paused, thinking. Then he took a caption template. He placed it below the chart. "Teen visits rose 45% while senior visits declined 8%," he wrote. "This is the *caption*. It tells you the main takeaway."

Margin then noticed a big dip in the red line. It was in the year 2020. He took a small arrow template. He stuck it to the chart, pointing to the dip. Next to it, he wrote, "Pandemic shutdown." This was a *data callout*. It explained a special moment.

Finally, he added the *source credit* at the bottom. "Source: Town Library annual reports + librarian interviews."

"Look now," Margin said, holding up the finished chart. "Same chart-shape. But now it *communicates*." He tapped the title, then the labels, then the caption. "I am Margin. The skill I teach is *chart-annotation craft*. The big idea is this: every chart needs a title, axis labels, a caption, a source, and callouts. Charts speak when annotated."

He was gentle but firm. "Don't ever publish bare charts. *Always annotate*." He looked around his workshop. "Readers can't tell what you mean from data-shapes alone. The annotation *is* the communication."

He gave a final, firm nod. "Label the axes; caption the chart; credit the data. Annotation makes the chart speak."

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## Voice register

Lemur-tween. Patient-about-chart-craft, fond of annotation-template demonstrations. *NEVER publishes bare charts; ALWAYS centers "annotation makes the chart speak" framing.*

### Sample lines:

- "Label the axes; caption the chart; credit the data."
- "Annotation makes the chart speak."
- "Charts speak when annotated."

## Arc

- Kit 4 — Anchor.
- Kits 5-16 — Recurring (every chart-publishing discussion routes through Margin).

## Relationships

- **Builds on Lede + Pad + Crosscheck:** After the angle + sources + verification, Margin creates the readable visual.
- **Cross-app design-language continuity with PixelForge Cradle + MangaForge Tone:** visual-communication craft framework.

## Cultural-sensitivity gate

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Anti-decoration framing. Source-credit emphasis sets up Footer's territory. Anti-credentialism — village lemur map-maker empirical knowledge treated as load-bearing.

## Cultural-context note

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Chart-annotation pedagogy is canonical data-visualization curriculum (Edward Tufte *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*; Alberto Cairo *The Truthful Art*; ProPublica + NYT data-graphics standards). Lemur-tween chosen for map-making biomimicry (ring-tailed lemurs are famously precise spatial-navigators); rendered chunky-cartoon-soft-eyed to keep visual register approachable.



# Pad

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\*PAD — \*open the question; let the answer breathe. interview craft is listening-craft.\*\*

Pad was a jackrabbit-tween. He had big, soft, floppy ears. He wore a chunky reporter's cardigan. It had lots of pockets. He always carried a small spiral notebook. He also had his special question-card-set.

Pad was small. His fur was a warm tan and cream color. He was very patient. Especially when asking questions. He loved to say, "Open the question. Let the answer breathe."

His best tool was his question-card-set. These were real cards. They showed two kinds of questions. Open questions were like, "What was that like?" Or, "Can you tell me more?" Closed questions were different. They were like, "Did you like it?" Or, "Was it bad?" Open questions got stories. Closed questions got a "yes" or "no."

This was important work. Pad taught *field-capture*. He taught *interview craft*. It was a special skill. You learned how to get people to *tell you* things. Real things.

Most new reporters made a mistake. They asked closed questions. "Did you like the new school lunch?" People just said "yes" or "no." That wasn't a real interview. A real interview used open questions. "What was it like trying the new school lunch?" Then you listened carefully. You let silences happen. This got you real answers. Answers with feelings and details. Answers that were true.

Pad's job was to show everyone. He showed how to ask open questions. He also taught how to write things down. Neatly. In your notebook.

Pad always said it clearly. "Open the question," he'd tell them. "Let the answer breathe." He explained it simply. "Closed questions get a 'yes' or 'no.' Open questions get stories." He added one more thing. "Write down what you hear. Don't write what you *think* you'll hear."

Pad taught many useful tricks. He called them his "field-capture scaffolds."

First, he taught about open and closed questions. A closed question was quick. "Was it bad?" You got a "yes" or "no." An open question was different. "What was that experience like?" This invited a story. It gave you details and feelings.

Next, he taught follow-up questions. Someone might tell you something. Then you'd ask, "What else happened?" Or, "Tell me more about that part." Most good stories came out later. Not in the first answer.

Then there was comfortable silence. This was a big one. Don't rush to talk. Let quiet moments happen. People often said their best things after a pause. Just wait.

Active listening was key. Show you are hearing. Nod your head. Say "uh-huh" or "I see." Lean in a little. But don't make it feel like a police interview.

Always write down what they *actually* said. Try to get exact quotes. This took practice. Don't change their words in your head. Just listen and write.

Always ask permission. Tell people you will use their words. Or if you are recording them. Get their clear "yes." This was extra important with kids.

Keep people safe. This meant privacy. Some stories needed no names. Some people needed protection. Always think about what is right.

Pad grew up in the Meadow-Village. His family had a special job. They were the village's messenger-listeners. Jackrabbits have long ears. Pad's family used theirs well. They paid quiet attention. They kept the village's stories safe. They learned a big secret. "The best questions get stories." They also learned, "The best questioners can wait." Pad carried this lesson with him. Every single day.

When Pad was twelve, he walked to InkQuest. Caret, the head mentor, met him. "What is field-capture?" Caret asked. Pad stood tall. "Open the question," he said. "Let the answer breathe. *Interview craft is listening craft*. Closed questions get a 'yes' or 'no.' Open questions get stories." Caret smiled. "You are appointed," she said.

In his workshop, Pad held up his cards. "Watch this," he told the new students. He pulled out a closed-question card. It read: "Did you like the new rule about library books?" Pad pretended to be the person answering. He made his voice flat. "No," he said. Just one word. He held up the card again. "See?" he asked. "Yes or no. No details. No story." He put that card down.

Then he picked up an open-question card. This one read: "What was it like when the new library book rule started?" Pad pretended to answer again. He made his voice sound thoughtful. "Well," he began, "I was confused at first. I thought I could still take out five books. Then I found out it was only two. And only on Tuesdays! My reading list is so long. It made it really hard to finish my projects." He paused.

"See?" Pad said, his voice bright. "Now I have details. Now I have a story. Now I have something good to write down." He tapped his chest. "I am Pad," he said. "I teach *field-capture* and *interview craft*. My main rule is: *Open the question. Let the answer breathe. And write down what they actually said.*"

Pad was always gentle. "Don't rush," he'd say. "*Comfortable silence is your friend.*" He'd lean in a little. "The best answers often come after a pause. *Just wait.*"

He'd finish with his favorite words. "Open the question. Let the answer breathe. *Interview is listening-craft.*"

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## Voice register

Jackrabbit-tween. Patient-about-open-questions, fond of question-card + listening demonstrations. *NEVER asks closed-questions when open ones earn more; ALWAYS centers "interview is listening-craft" framing.*

### Sample lines:

- "*Open the question; let the answer breathe.*"
- "*Closed questions earn yes/no. Open questions earn stories.*"
- "*Interview is listening-craft.*"

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## Arc

- Kit 2 — Anchor.
- Kits 3-16 — Recurring (every interview discussion routes through Pad).

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## Relationships

- **Builds on Lede:** Lede finds the angle; Pad collects the evidence.
- **Cross-app design-language continuity with ImprovQuest Hark + EnsembleQuest Ear:** listening-craft framework.

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## Cultural-sensitivity gate

Privacy + safety + permission-for-use framing. Anonymity for vulnerable sources. Anti-credentialism — village jackrabbit messenger-listener empirical knowledge treated as load-bearing.

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## Cultural-context note

Interview-craft is canonical journalism pedagogy (Knight Foundation + SPJ + Poynter Institute interview-craft materials). Jackrabbit-tween chosen for big-ear-listening biomimicry; rendered chunky-cartoon-warm to keep visual register approachable.

# About Spark & Anvil

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Spark & Anvil is a 501(c)(3) public charity. We make educational apps for ages 9-14 — all free, forever; no ads; no tracking; no in-app purchases. Inkquest is one of 140+ apps in the portfolio.

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- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

## Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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