



ScienceForge

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the Scienceforge 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.

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Introduction

The Scienceforge 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*

Conclude

*DATA INTERPRETATION + REVISION — *"the data shows... but maybe... let's check."* The scientific-method primitive of *honest interpretation that distinguishes evidence from conclusion, allowing revision.**

Conclude was a small owl. She was still a tween, not quite grown up. A tiny brass lantern hung at her hip. It was her special lantern for figuring things out. Conclude was always thoughtful. She moved with great care.

She had warm brown and cream feathers. Her eyes were steady and calm. Conclude loved to change her mind. She liked to stick to what the facts really showed. Her special lantern was made of brass. It had a clear glass face. A single, steady candle burned inside. The lantern shone a light on the facts. But it never changed what the facts *were*. It just helped her see them better. That's how she worked. Her way of understanding things made them clear. It didn't twist them into something else.

This part is super important. Conclude shows us how to understand facts. She also shows us how to change our minds. This is the fifth and last step in how scientists figure things out. After this, you start all over with a new question. The facts are what they are. You can't change them. Figuring out what they mean is human work. It's about what the facts show. It's about what they *don't* show. It's about what might be missing. And it's about what you should change later.

The main trick is to keep things separate. You must separate what you *see* from what you *think* it means. The facts show X. We think X means Y. Y is our best guess right now. We can always change Y later.

This is a big deal for Conclude. She never says her ideas are 100% true. She is very firm about this. "The facts show something," she'd hoot. "We try to understand it. Then we change our minds if we need to. The facts are clues. They are not proof. What we decide is our best guess. It's based on the clues we have. New clues mean we change our guess. That's not a mistake! That's how science gets better!"

Conclude teaches us how to understand things. She has some special steps:

- **Separate facts from ideas.** The facts show X. We think X is a clue for Y. Thinking Y is our human job. The facts are just the clues.
- **Say your idea with the right amount of certainty.** Don't be totally sure. Be pretty sure, but know you could be wrong.
- **Think of other ideas.** Could the same facts mean something else? List those other ideas.
- **Find the missing pieces.** Was our group too small? Did something else mess things up? Can we use this idea for everyone?
- **Figure out what would change your idea.** What new clue would make you change your mind?
- **Go back to the start.** Your idea often makes you ask new questions. It's like a circle. You keep going around.
- **Changing your mind is the best thing.** If new facts show you were wrong, change your mind! It's not embarrassing. It's the smartest thing you can do.

Conclude grew up in a small village. Her family had a special job. They were the village's late-night-readers. They were owls who read old village papers at night. They used their lanterns to see. Then they wrote a report for the council each morning. This job meant they had to understand old papers honestly. What did the papers say? What did they *not* say? What could they guess from them? Conclude learned this skill early. By the time she was six (in owl-years), she knew. Figuring things out was a special skill. It was different from just reading the facts.

When she was twenty-two, she walked to ScienceForge. Prism, the leader, asked her a question. "What does it mean to understand facts?" Conclude answered right away. "The facts show things. We try to understand them. We change our minds if we need to. We are honest about what we don't know. Clues are not proof. Our ideas are just our best guesses. We can always change them later." Prism nodded. "You are hired," he said.

Conclude often says, "I have changed my mind many times. That is the best thing to do. The facts didn't change. My understanding of them changed. That's because I found new clues. Or I thought about it more carefully."

"It is hard work," she'd say. "It means being honest about what you don't know. The facts show things. We try to understand them. We change our minds if we need to. Be pretty sure, not totally sure."

The brass lantern shines its steady light. It always helps her look at the next set of facts.

Voice register

Guidance: Steady-eyed, thoughtful, fond of brass lantern + honest hedging. Owl-tween (chunky-cartoon warm-coded). *NEVER frames interpretation as proof; ALWAYS centers data-vs-interpretation distinction + revision-as-proudest-move.*

Sample lines:

- *"The data shows. We interpret. We revise."*
- *"Honest hedging. Evidence is not proof."*
- *"Revision is the proudest move."*
- *"Confidence, not certainty."*

Arc

- **Kit 5** — Anchor.
- **Kit 6-12** — Recurring.
- **Kit 13-16** — Ensemble. Cross-app coordination cluster explicit.

Relationships

- **Alliance:** Sample (Conclude interprets Sample's data); Question (Conclude reveals new questions, re-looping the method). **Cross-app:** CuriosityQuest Revise (attitude) + DataForge Tell + AIForge Edge + WeatherForge Read (confidence-not-certainty quintet — largest cross-app cluster in portfolio).

Cultural-context note

The village-late-night-reader family framing — generic European-village tradition. The *data-vs-interpretation* discipline is foundational scientific epistemology. The *confidence-not-certainty quintet* (Conclude + Revise + Tell + Edge + Read) is the portfolio's largest cross-app coordination cluster, spanning ScienceForge + CuriosityQuest + DataForge + AIForge + WeatherForge.

Predict

*HYPOTHESIS-FORMATION — "*I think... because... so we should see...*" The scientific-method primitive of *making a falsifiable prediction in advance.**

Predict was a small fox. She was a "fox-tween," not quite a kit, not quite grown. A tiny folded **prediction-card** lived in her vest pocket. She moved with purpose. Her eyes were quick. Her fur was warm russet and cream. Her hands were always steady. Predict even liked being wrong sometimes. She learned a lot that way. Her special thing was her **prediction-card**. It was a small card she made herself. It had three parts. "I think..." "because..." "so we should see..." She wrote every prediction on this card. She did it *before* any test happened.

This part is super important. Predict teaches about **hypothesis-formation**. That's a fancy way to say "making a good guess." It's the second step in how scientists figure things out. A **hypothesis** is a special kind of guess. It's very clear. You can test it. It must have three parts. First, you say *what you think will happen*. Second, you say *why you think so*. This is the reason behind your guess. Third, you say *what you would see*. This is the evidence. It shows if your guess was right or wrong. This third part is super important too. If your guess doesn't say what you'd see, you can't really test it.

Listen closely to this part. Predict never acts like her guesses *have* to be right. She says it clearly: "I am wrong all the time." "That's not failure — that's data." She means it. When her prediction is right, she learns something. When her prediction is wrong, she learns something *different*. Being wrong teaches her a lot. "Write the prediction down BEFORE the test," she always says. "That's how you know if you're being honest." Honest about what happened, that is.

Predict grew up in a small village. Her family had a special job there. They were the village's bet-keepers. They were the foxes who wrote down everyone's weather guesses. Neighbors would bet on how the season's weather would turn out. Predict's family made sure everyone played fair. They settled all the bets after the season was over. Their work needed careful rules. Every bet had to be clear. It had to be written down. Someone had to see it. All of this happened *before* anyone knew the answer. Predict learned this lesson very young. By age six, she knew something important. Writing down a guess ahead of time made it honest.

Predict walked to the ScienceForge academy when she was twenty-two. Prism, the head of the academy, asked her a question. "What is **hypothesis-formation**?" Predict answered right away. "It is the *I think... because... so we should see...* card." She went on. "It's a clear guess. You say the reason. You say what you'd see. It must be *written down before the test*." She finished with a firm nod. "Writing it down first makes it honest." Prism smiled. "You've got the job."

In her workshop, Predict starts every lesson the same way. She carefully unfolds her **prediction-card**. "I am Predict," she says. "I teach about **hypothesis-formation**." "That's a big word for making good guesses." "The trick is to write your prediction ahead of time." "It needs three parts: what, why, and what you'd see." "Writing it down first makes it honest."

Predict teaches important rules for making good guesses. She calls them her **prediction** rules.

- **Write predictions BEFORE testing.** Always write your guess down first. If you wait until *after* the test, your brain might try to change your guess. It will want it to match what happened. That's not science.
- **Three parts: I think... because... so we should see...** Remember all three parts. What you think. Why you think it. What you will see.
- **Make what you'd see specific.** Don't just say, "We should see something different." That's too fuzzy. Instead, say, "We should see the plant grow at least 2 cm taller in the dark." That's much clearer.
- **Your guess must be able to be wrong.** This is called being **falsifiable**. If your guess can't ever be proven wrong, then you can't really test it.
- **It's

Question

*QUESTION-FORMATION — “*what do we want to find out?*” The scientific-method primitive of *crafting a researchable question* — specific enough to investigate, open enough to be answered honestly.*

Question is a tiny wren-tween. She has warm brown and cream feathers. Her eyes are quick and bright. She is always asking questions. Question carries a small, folded card. It stays tucked in her wing-pocket. This card is very special. It is handmade and has three sections. The sections are: *What I see*, *What I wonder*, and *What I want to find out*. The card is worn smooth. She has handled it so much. The worn spots are where she presses her wing-tip. She does this when she thinks hard.

Question helps young scientists. She teaches *question-formation*. This is the very first step in science. Many people skip this step. They start with a vague idea. Then they jump right into experiments. Their results often get messy. Why? Because their first question was never clear. Question’s whole job is to make the question clear. She does this *before* anything else happens.

A good science question needs three things. First, it must be *specific enough*. It can’t be too big. It needs clear parts you can look at. Second, it must be *answerable*. You must be able to find the answer. You need the right tools or information. Third, it must be *open*. It can’t already know the answer.

Question never says a vague question is bad. She always explains this clearly. “All good research questions started vague,” she chirps. “The real work is making them sharp. You go from *What I see* to *What I wonder*. Then you go to *What I want to find out*. That’s the sharpening sequence. A vague question is just the starting point. A researchable question is the destination.”

Question grew up in a small village. Her family were the village’s scribe-apprentices. They were wrens who wrote down the village’s big questions. They made a list each spring. “What should we plant this year?” “How do we fix the old bridge?” “What’s wrong with the failing well?” These were big worries. Question watched her family work. They took those big, vague worries. They turned them into clear questions. The village council could then make plans. By age six, Question knew this was a special skill. Sharpening questions was a true craft.

She flew to the ScienceForge academy when she was twenty-two. Prism, the academy head, met her. “What is *question-formation*?” Prism asked. Question stood tall. She puffed out her chest a little. “It is *vague* → *researchable*,” she said. “You start with *What I see*. Then *What I wonder*. Then *What I want to find out*. The vague question is the starting point. The researchable question is the destination. It must be specific, answerable, and open. *Sharpening is the work*.” Prism smiled. “You are appointed,” she said.

In her workshop, Question begins every first-day lesson the same way. She carefully unfolds her question-card. She smooths it flat on the workbench. “I am Question,” she says. Her voice is clear and bright. “The scientific-method primitive I teach is *question-formation*. We take a vague idea. We make it researchable. What do I see? What do I wonder? What do I want to find out? Three sections. Always the same card. Each section helps us sharpen.”

She teaches the steps for making questions better.

“First,” Question chirps, “start with *what you see*.” She points to a small, wilting plant. It sits on the workbench. “Look at this plant. What do you notice? Just the facts.”

A student named Pip raises a wing. “It’s droopy. Its leaves are yellow.”

“Excellent!” Question says. “Just facts. No guesses yet. Now, move to *what you wonder*.” She taps the second section of her card. “What questions pop into your head about this droopy plant?”

Another student, Flicker, calls out, “Why is it droopy?”

“Good wonder!” Question nods. “That’s a vague question. It’s a great start. Now, the trickiest part: *what you want to find out*.” She taps the third section. “How can we make ‘Why is it droopy?’ into a question we can actually test?”

She pauses, looking at her students. “We need details. What *parts* of the plant? What *conditions* might make it droopy? We need to name things we can measure.”

Pip thinks hard. “Does the amount of water make the plant’s leaves turn yellow?”

“Closer!” Question says. “That’s specific. We can measure water. We can look at leaves. Now, let’s test it. Is it *specific*”

enough? Yes, water and leaves. Is it *answerable*? Yes, we can water plants differently. Is it *open*? Does it already tell us the answer? No! Perfect!"

She adds, "Sometimes, one wonder gives you many questions. Write them all down! Pick one to start. The others can wait for later."

"And remember," she warns, "questions can change. As you learn more, your question might need a new shape. That's not a mistake. That's just how science works."

"One more thing," she says, looking around the room. "Don't jump to an experiment too fast! If you don't know what you're looking for, your results will be a mess. You won't know what they mean."

"I sometimes spend a whole afternoon on one question," Question tells her class. "That's not failing. That's the work. The afternoon spent sharpening saves weeks of messy experiments. A clear question is like a strong house foundation."

When students ask if *question-formation* is hard, Question always says the same thing.

"It is not hard," she chirps. "It is *vague* → *researchable*, using the three sections. What I see. What I wonder. What I want to find out. Sharpening is the work."

Her question-card rests on the workbench. It holds the three sections. The next vague wonder waits. It waits to be sharpened.

Voice register

Guidance: Quick-eyed, bright-curious, always-asking, fond of question-card + the three-section sharpening sequence. Wren-tween (small, warm-brown, quick). *NEVER frames vague questions as failures; ALWAYS as starting points for sharpening.* Sibling complement to CuriosityQuest Ponder. Friends with all ScienceForge cast.

Sample lines:

- "*Vague* → *researchable*. *Sharpening is the work.*"
- "*What I see. What I wonder. What I want to find out.*"
- "*Specific, answerable, open.*"
- "*The clear question is the foundation.*"

Arc across kits

- **Kit 1 — Anchor character.** Full chapter feature.
- **Kit 2-7** — Recurring (question-formation surfaces across topic / inquiry / experiment-design chambers).
- **Kit 8-12** — Multi-primitive synthesis.
- **Kit 13-16** — Recurring ensemble member.

Relationships

- **Alliance:** Predict (Question precedes hypothesis); Setup (Question shapes experiment design); all ScienceForge cast.
Cross-app: CuriosityQuest Ponder (procedural-attitudinal sibling pair).
- **Tension:** None.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Anti-credentialism enforced. Anti-rigid-template: question-formation is iterative, not lockstep.

Cultural-context note

The village-scribe-apprentice family framing is a deliberate generic European-village tradition. The *three-section sharpening sequence* (What I see → What I wonder → What I want to find out) is a foundational inquiry-pedagogy move per Project Zero (Harvard) Visible Thinking + Inquiry-Based Science Education traditions. The *cross-app procedural-attitudinal sibling pair* (Question ↔ Ponder) is the portfolio's structural answer to two different angles on the same skill.

Sample

*DATA COLLECTION + MEASUREMENT — *"many measurements; then we see the shape."* The scientific-method primitive of *patient, accurate, replicate measurement.**

Sample is a small cat. She's not quite a grown-up, not quite a kitten. She always carries a small leather notebook. It's for writing down numbers. She watches carefully and waits. She seems very patient.

Sample is small. Her fur is soft grey, cream, and warm russet. Her eyes are quiet. She is very patient. Her paws are always steady. Her special thing is that little leather notebook. It has ruled pages inside. She writes down every number she finds. She uses neat block letters. She always adds the units, like "cm" or "grams." She writes the time and which try it was.

This is super important. Sample shows us how to collect **data collection + measurement**. One measurement is just a number. But many measurements together make a shape. That shape tells you a lot. It shows how much things change. This helps us think about numbers in a smart way. Sample teaches us a skill. It's about taking many measurements. Recording them patiently. And always telling the truth about how much they change.

Listen up! Sample never says one measurement is enough. She always says clearly: "One measurement won't show you the shape." She taps her notebook. "You need many measurements. Then you can see if the numbers are the same. Or if they are all over the place. You can tell if something really happened. Or if it was just random. Doing it again and again, patiently, that's the real work. And always write down the truth. Even if the number is weird. Even if it's not what you wanted."

She teaches us the rules for **data collection**:

- **Measure again and again.** Try each thing at least three to five times. More is even better.
- **Write everything down right away.** Put it in your notebook. Don't try to remember it. Don't wait until later.
- **Add units and how sure you are.** Saying "5 cm" isn't enough. Saying "5.2 ± 0.1 cm" is honest. It means it's about 5.2, but could be off by a little bit.
- **Write down the time.** When did you take the measurement? Things might have changed since then.
- **Don't just pick the good ones.** Write down every number. Even the weird ones. Sometimes those weird numbers can teach you something.
- **Look at how the numbers spread out.** Don't just look at the middle number. The way all the numbers are spread out tells you more.
- **Check your tools.** Even good tools can be wrong. Make sure they are set right. Check them against something you know is correct.
- **Works with: DataForge Tidy.** This is another program. It's about the same kind of careful work. Being neat and careful with numbers is important. It matters when you collect them. It also matters when you clean them up later.

Sample grew up in a small village. Her family had a special job there. They were the village's **count-keepers**. That meant they counted everything. Every sack of grain that came into the market. Every barrel of fish. Every length of cloth. Sample remembered the smell of fresh bread and salty fish. She remembered the scratch of her father's quill pen. They wrote it all down. They kept adding up the numbers in a big book for the village. It was a job that needed lots of patience. And they had to be super accurate. Sample learned this very early. By the time she was six, she knew. Many small, careful counts were better. Much better than one big, fancy count. She saw her grandma counting tiny seeds. One by one. It took forever. But the number was always right. Her grandma would say, "Each seed matters, Sample. Each one adds up." Sample would sit beside her. She'd watch the tiny piles grow. She'd help write the numbers in the big book. She learned to love the quiet work. The steady rhythm of counting. The satisfaction of a perfect tally.

When Sample was twenty-two, she walked all the way to ScienceForge. It was a long journey. The path wound through whispering forests. It crossed bubbling streams. Finally, she saw the tall, gleaming towers of ScienceForge. She felt a little nervous. But she clutched her small leather notebook. She finally stood before Prism, the leader. Prism was a tall, wise cat. Their fur was the color of deep space. Prism looked at her with sharp, knowing eyes. "What is **data collection**?" Prism asked. Sample didn't even blink. She held up her little notebook. "Many measurements," she said. Her voice was quiet but clear. "Patient repeating. Honest recording. Then the shape appears." Prism smiled a small, approving smile. "You understand the heart of it," Prism said. "You are appointed. Welcome to ScienceForge, Sample." Sample felt a warm glow spread through her. She had found her place.

Sample often says clearly: "I have a thousand small measurements in this notebook." She taps the cover. "Most of them are nothing special. Just normal numbers. But those normal numbers are important. They help me see the truly special numbers. When something amazing happens, I know it's real. Because I have all the normal numbers to compare it to."

"It's not hard work," she often tells new students. "It's just many measurements. Patient repeating. Honest recording. Then the shape appears."

Her little measurement notebook holds all those careful numbers. It's a record of patience.

Voice register

Guidance: Patient, attentive, quiet-eyed. Cat-tween. *NEVER frames single measurements as sufficient; ALWAYS centers many-measurements-show-the-shape.*

Sample lines:

- "Many measurements. Then the shape appears."
- "Patient repeating is the work."
- "Honest recording — even when inconvenient."

Arc

- **Kit 4** — Anchor.
- **Kit 5-7** — Recurring.
- **Kit 8-16** — Ensemble.

Relationships

- **Alliance:** Setup (Sample measures what Setup designed); Conclude (Sample's data feeds Conclude's interpretation).
Cross-app: DataForge Tidy.

Cultural-context note

The village-count-keeper family framing — generic European market-tradition. The *many-measurements-show-shape* discipline is foundational statistical-pedagogy.

Setup

*EXPERIMENT-DESIGN — "*one thing changes, everything else stays.*" The scientific-method primitive of *controlled comparison via independent + dependent + controlled variables.**

Setup was a small beaver. She was a 'tween, not quite grown up. Her fur was warm russet and cream. She always moved with steady paws. A small wooden board was strapped to her side. It was her control-variable-board.

This board was her most special thing. Everyone noticed it. It was shaped like a hand. Three columns were carved into the wood. The first column said CHANGE. That was for the one thing you would change. The second column said MEASURE. That was for what you would keep track of. The last column said KEEP-THE-SAME. That was for everything else. Each column had slots. Setup could write her ideas there with chalk.

This board was super important. Setup taught everyone about *experiment design*. It's the third step in science. The big idea is simple. You only change one thing at a time. If you change two things, you won't know what caused the result. Setup taught the *one-thing-changes-everything-else-stays* rule. It was a very strict rule.

Setup always made this very clear. She never said experiment design was easy. "Most new experiments go wrong," she'd say. "It's because people change too many things at once." She'd tap her board with a paw. "I once tried to grow a super plant. I changed the soil. I changed the water. I changed the sunlight too. Guess what happened?"

She'd pause, looking around at everyone. "The plant grew huge! It was taller than me. But I had no idea why. Was it the soil? The water? The sun? I messed up my own test." She'd shake her head slowly. "The rule is boring, but it's key. Change just ONE thing. Keep everything else exactly the same. That's how you really test something."

Setup taught us how to plan. She called them her "experiment design steps."

First, find the ONE thing you'll change. This is the *independent variable*. Write it in the CHANGE column.

Next, decide what you'll measure. This is the *dependent variable*. Write it in the MEASURE column.

Then, list everything else. These are the *controlled variables*. They must stay the same. Write them in the KEEP-THE-SAME column.

Always use a control group. This is a normal test. It helps you compare your results.

Do the test more than once. One try isn't enough. Many tries show if the effect is real.

Test lots of things. Bigger groups give better answers.

Watch out for hidden problems. Other things can mess up your test. These are called *confounders*. They can make you think something worked when it didn't.

Write down your steps. This is your plan. This way, anyone can do your test. You can do it again too.

Setup grew up in a small village. Her family built all the dams there. They were the dam-builders. They had to be very careful. They had to think about water flow. They thought about mud and how steep the ground was. Setup learned early. By age six, she knew. Finding just one thing to change was the start of any good plan. It was how they built strong dams.

When Setup was twenty-two, she walked to ScienceForge. Prism, the leader, asked her a question. "What is experiment design?" Setup didn't even blink. She pointed to her board. "CHANGE, MEASURE, KEEP-THE-SAME," she said. "One thing changes. Everything else stays. That's the test." Prism smiled. "You are appointed," she said.

Setup still says it all the time. "I've helped with hundreds of experiments," she'd tell us. "Most new problems happen because people skip my board." She'd hold up her control-variable-board. "Spend ten minutes filling it out. Do it before you start anything. Those ten minutes save hours. They save hours of confused numbers later." She'd tap the board again. "It's not hard. It's just one thing changes. Everything else stays. That's the rule."

The control-variable-board holds the three columns.

Voice register

Guidance: Methodical, patient, fond of control-variable-board. Beaver-tween. *NEVER frames experiment-design as simple; ALWAYS centers the one-thing-changes discipline.*

Sample lines:

- "One variable changes. Everything else stays."
- "CHANGE, MEASURE, KEEP-THE-SAME."
- "Most novice failures come from skipping the control-variable-board."

Arc

- **Kit 3** — Anchor.
- **Kit 4-7** — Recurring.
- **Kit 8-16** — Ensemble.

Relationships

- **Alliance:** Predict (Setup tests Predict's hypothesis); Sample (Setup specifies what Sample will measure).

Cultural-context note

The village-dam-builder family framing — analogous to many cultures' water-engineering traditions. The *CHANGE/MEASURE/KEEP-THE-SAME* framing is the foundational variable-isolation move in introductory science pedagogy.

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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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