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Activity Guide

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Sammy Keyes and the Hotel Thief

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ABOUT THE STORY

Samantha Keyes is bored. She has to be quiet and stay indoors so her grandmother's neighbor won't know she is living with her grandmother illegally. While amusing herself by watching the neighborhood through binoculars, Sammy notices something very suspicious. A man is taking something out of a purse in the Heavenly Hotel – and he sees her! Can Sammy's ingenuity help her to escape the clutches of the hotel thief and figure out his identity?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wendelin Van Draanen lives in Santa Monica, California, where she teaches math and computer science as well as writing books for young people. She grew up reading series such as the Nancy Drew and Encyclopedia Brown books, so writing about a young detective was a natural move for her. Ms. Van Draanen is the author of several more Sammy Keyes mysteries, including *Sammy Keyes and the Hotel Thief* and *Sammy Keyes and the Skeleton Man*, both Live Oak Readalongs.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask students if they know anyone who has been robbed or if they have ever heard about a robbery in the news. Have them tell how the robbery was done and if and how the thief was caught. Explain that the story they will read is about a robbery and the girl who helps to catch the thief.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- “What does Sammy see through her binoculars?”
- “What does Heather do to Sammy, and Sammy do to Heather?”
- “How does Sammy trick Heather?”
- “Who is the real thief?”
- “Why do you think Officer Borsch is so angry at Sammy?” (*Draw conclusions*)
- “Do you think Sammy acts bravely or rashly?” (*Make judgments*)

Vocabulary

Copy this word search square on the board. Have students find the vocabulary words from the story below in the square and write the definition for each word.

Words: insufferable, vicinity, burglary, evidence

t r l t b u r g l a r y f h n e v i d e n c e t i n z l
m t c r n f u l g l p t o x g m l m o d e n t r b l a
e c v i c i n l t y w e p w v i n s u f f e r a b l e x
j s t o r p w u e n x o d g q b o r l a r g l r y u t
s q o p a b u h l g r a b y r i l e y e a b s l p n j

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Art: Ad Campaign

Have students work in pairs to create an advertising brochure and slogan for the ice cream treat Double Dynamo. When pairs have finished their brochures, they can display and compare their advertisements.

Science: History of Binoculars

Sammy Keyes uses binoculars to search out the hotel thief. Have students research the invention of binoculars to watch the hotel thief. Have them write brief reports telling who invented binoculars and where.

Language Arts: Character Sketch

Sammy Keyes' character is vital to the progress of the plot in *Sammy Keyes and the Hotel Thief*. Have students write a character sketch of Sammy. They should describe her physical appearance and her personality traits. Then have them explain which character traits help to move the plot of the story along.

Health: Nose First Aid

Heather's nose wasn't really broken, but it was injured and it did bleed. Have students look in first aid manuals to find out how to treat a blow to the nose. They can write instructions on how to handle such an injury.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

The Edgar Awards

Sammy Keyes and the Hotel Thief won an Edgar Award in 1999. Have students use the keywords *Edgar Awards* to find out what books have won the award in the years before and since. Have them list the books and report back to class.