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# Activity Guide

800-788-1121

## Sammy Keyes and the Skeleton Man

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### ABOUT THE STORY

It's Halloween, and Samantha Keyes is trick-or-treating with her friends. When they get to the scary Bush house – so called because it is surrounded by huge bushes – where the peculiar Bush man lives, the girls dare each other to ring the bell. When Sammy peers in the window, she sees flames and rushes inside. There, she finds the Bush man tied up and injured and the house on fire. And that's just the start of the mystery that Sammy decides to unravel!

### 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 have ever had a classmate say something about them that was untrue or unfair. Encourage them to think about ways to deal with such a problem. Explain that the main character in the story they will read solves the problem in a unique way as she works to solve a mystery at the same time.

### READING ACTIVITIES

#### Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- “What does Sammy do when she sees the fire?”
- “What is wrong with the Bush man?”
- “How does Sammy trick Heather Acosta?”
- “Who was behind the robbery at the Bush house?”
- “What does Sammy’s plot against Heather reveal about Sammy’s character?” (Draw conclusions)
- “List five adjectives that describe Sammy. Explain your choices.” (Express opinions)

### Vocabulary

Each of these words from the story has a base word that is also listed. Ask students to define each word and its base word. Encourage them to think of another word that can be made from the base words.

inheritance – inherit	donation – donate
inappropriate – appropriate	conference – confer
sentimental – sentiment	frustration – frustrate

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

#### Math: Book Prices

Mr. Bell offers 25% of a book’s cover price as cash or 30% as store credit. Have students find out how much a seller would get as cash and credit for each of these books.

For Whom the Bell Tolls -- \$12.00
The Origin of Species -- \$18.00
The Fall of the House of Usher -- \$9.00
Huckleberry Finn -- \$10.50

#### Science: Who is Charles Darwin?

One of the first editions the author mentions is Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. Have students find out who Charles Darwin was and why his book was important. Ask them to report on their findings to the class.

#### Language Arts: Famous Authors

Other first editions were by the writers Ernest Hemingway, Edgar Allen Poe, and Mark Twain. Have students research one of these authors and write a brief biographical sketch on the writer and his work.

#### Art: The Marsh Monster

Have students design and illustrate their own idea of what Marsh Monster Halloween costume might look like. Encourage them to make a costume horrific, imaginative – and green.

### 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.

#### Other Sammy Keyes Books

Have students use the keywords *Sammy Keyes* or *Wendelin Van Draanen* to find descriptions or reviews of other Sammy Keyes books on the Internet. Ask them to write a brief summary of another Sammy Keyes book they would like to read and then share it with the class.