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# Activity Guide

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## Sammy Keyes and the Dead Giveaway

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### ABOUT THE STORY

Sammy Keyes is at it again. Only this time, she's the one who has committed a crime! Her homeroom teacher's lovebird is dead, and Sammy is to blame. But that's not the only law-breaking that is going on – there's cheating, robbery, and even murder as Sammy races to expose the criminals before she herself is exposed.

### 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 Psycho Kitty Queen*, both Live Oak Readalongs.

### INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask students if they know what kind of government their town or city has. Tell them that the book they will read includes a mystery centered on a plan developed by a city government – but that's not the only mystery in it!

### READING ACTIVITIES

#### **Comprehension/Thinking Skills**

- "How does Tango die?"
- "What crime does Heather commit?"
- "What does Sammy discover about Mrs. Willawago?"
- "What has Mrs. Stone done? Why did she do it?" (*Draw Conclusions*)
- "What does Sammy mean when she says, 'There's freedom in the truth'?" (*Analyze*)

### Vocabulary

Write these words on the board. Have students work in pairs to look up each word, write its part of speech and definition, and find its origin. Then pairs can use each word in a sentence of their own.

nominate  
compensation  
resolution

protocol  
ballot

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

#### **Social Studies: Old Trains**

Sammy is interested in the exhibit of old trains. Have students look up the history of the American railroad and write a brief essay describing how and when the railroads were built. Ask them to find illustrations of old train cars to share with the rest of the class.

#### **Science: Lovebirds**

Sammy's teacher brings a pair of lovebirds to class. Have students use reference books or the Internet to find out about lovebirds: what kind of birds they are, where they are from, how they are bred, and how to take care of them. If possible, have students print photographs of lovebirds to share with the rest of the class.

#### **Language Arts: Words from Other Words**

One of Sammy's school assignments is to make as many words as possible from the words *William Shakespeare*. She comes up with 126! Have students work in pairs to complete the same assignment. Partners can report to the class on how many different words they can make from the name.

#### **Social Studies: Your Local Government**

Have students learn about what kind of government heads their village, town, or city. Ask them to find out the following:

- Who is in charge
- How many are in the governing group
- How often they meet
- What kind of issues they handle
- How often elections are held

### 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.

#### **Eminent Domain**

Sammy Keyes learns about the problem of eminent domain, in which the government is able to take private property for its own uses. Have students work in pairs to find out about the June 2005 Supreme Court ruling on eminent domain. Partners can write a synopsis of the ruling and can report on what they learn to the class.