Name _____ Date _____

The Library Mystery

Short story · 3rd–4th grade

Every Monday for three weeks, the same thing happened at Oak Street Elementary: a book was missing from the library's animal shelf. First a book about owls, then one about raccoons, then one about foxes.

"Someone is stealing them," said Mr. Grant, the librarian, frowning. Some kids blamed Tyler, who always checked out animal books. Tyler looked miserable.

Jada didn't think it was Tyler. "Mysteries need evidence," she said, pulling out her notebook. She wrote down the clues: (1) Only animal books. (2) Always gone by Monday. (3) Always books about night animals.

"Night animals," Jada muttered. "Owls, raccoons, foxes. Who reads about night animals on the weekend?"

She asked Mr. Grant who used the library on weekends. "Nobody," he said. "Well, except the after-school program on Friday afternoons, run by Ms. Kim from the community center."

On Friday, Jada visited Ms. Kim's group. In the corner was a bulletin board covered in drawings of owls and foxes, with a sign: OUR NIGHT ANIMALS PROJECT. On the shelf below sat three library books.

"Oh no," said Ms. Kim when Jada explained. "I thought the kids had checked them out properly! They must have just carried them over." The books were returned that afternoon, and Tyler got an apology.

Mr. Grant gave Jada a new notebook with DETECTIVE written on the cover. "You didn't just guess," he said. "You followed the clues."

Questions

1. What kind of books went missing?

2. Why did some kids blame Tyler?

3. What did Jada use to solve the mystery?

4. Where were the books?

5. What can you infer about why the books were taken?

6. What is the lesson?

7. Why was it unfair to blame Tyler?

8. Which clue was most important?

The lesson in my own words

Answer Key

1. Books about night animals.
2. He often checked out animal books.
3. Clues and questions.
4. At the after-school program's project.
5. For a school project, by mistake.
6. Follow the evidence; don't jump to conclusions.
7. Answers will vary.
8. Answers will vary.

Lesson: Careful observation and asking questions solve mysteries; don't jump to conclusions.