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Activity Guide

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Sammy Keyes and the Art of Deception

ABOUT THE STORY

Sammy Keyes is at it again. She visits an art gallery as part of a school assignment, and while she's there, a thief tries to hold up the place. It doesn't end there, either. One of the artists whose work was exhibited at the gallery seems to be hiding something. Is she connected with the robbery? Sammy is determined to get to the bottom of the mystery. What she finds out is more startling than...a surrealist painting!

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 BOOK

Ask students if they have ever been to an art museum or a gallery. Discuss with them their favorite artists and styles of art. Then tell them that the book they will read is about a girl who finds that the world of art is full of mystery and intrigue.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

"Why does Sammy have to visit the gallery?"

"What happens when Sammy is at the gallery?"

"Why does Grams get so mad at Hudson?" (Draw Conclusions)

"What is the mystery behind Diane Reijden's paintings?"

"Were you surprised when Sammy solved the mystery? Explain." (Make Judgments)

Vocabulary

Write these words and cloze sentences on the chalkboard. Have students copy the sentences and insert the correct word in each blank.

chivalrous temperamental fortitude intimidate accomplice

1. Artists are known for their unpredictable, _____ behavior.
2. Sammy Keyes doesn't scare or _____ easily.
3. The thief must have had an _____ to help him in the robbery.
4. Casey treated Sammy in an old-fashioned, _____ way.
5. Sammy faced the loss of her mother with strength and _____.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Art: A Painting that Speaks to You

Sammy is deeply affected by one of the paintings at the art gallery. Ask students to look through books of paintings to find one that has a similar effect on them. Have students show the paintings they have chosen and explain why and how the art affects them.

Social Studies: Understanding the Renaissance

Sammy and Marissa go to a Renaissance fair. Ask students to work in small groups to look in reference and history books to find out about the Renaissance in Italy. Groups can focus on one of these topics: painting, sculpture, and architecture; jousting; music; clothing; or food. Have groups report on what they learn to the rest of the class.

Art: Modern Artists

Sammy doesn't think much of the splotches Tess Winters paints. Ask students to find out about a modern artist who paints in a non-representational style, such as Jackson Pollock, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Mark Rothko, and Wassily Kandinsky. Students can learn about the artist they choose and write a brief biographical sketch.

Language Arts: Pick a Place

Sammy Keyes describes her friend Hudson's porch as the place she'd most like to spend the rest of her life. Ask students to choose one place they know where they'd most like to spend their time, or they can choose a place they've heard about or imagined. Have them write a description of the place. Volunteers can read their descriptions to the class.

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.

Renaissance Fairs

Have students use the keywords Renaissance fair to find out about an actual fair. Ask them to jot down details about one of the fairs they find on the Internet – where it is located, what activities and food it offers, and so on. Students can compare the offerings of the fairs they find.