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Activity Guide

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Sammy Keyes and the Psycho Kitty Queen

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ABOUT THE STORY

Someone has been kidnapping and killing cats – lots of cats. Sammy Keyes is on the case, but there is much to distract her – her newfound interest in pro wrestling, her discovery that her mother has been keeping an important secret from her, and, of course, her longtime dispute with the dreadful Heather Acosta. When Sammy's own cat goes missing, though, her focus is back on the case. Will she find the perpetrator in time?

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 Dead Giveaway*, both Live Oak Readalongs.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Tell students that the story they will read is about a teenage detective who solves mysteries but gets into lots of trouble along the way. Encourage discussion about the problems a young sleuth could encounter, and write students' predictions about what might happen to Sammy on the board.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "Who is the Psycho Kitty Queen and why does Sammy give her that name?"
- "What happens when Sammy does a front bump?"
- "What has Sammy's mother done that upsets Sammy?"
- "Who does El Gato turn out to be?"
- "Why are both Heather and Sammy upset about sharing their birthdays?"

(Compare and Contrast; Draw Conclusions)

Vocabulary

Write these words from the book and their definitions on the board. Have students copy them and draw a line from each word to its definition.

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| 1. sinister | A. causing |
| 2. conspiracy | B. fair |
| 3. perspective | C. evil |
| 4. inflicting | D. unimportant |
| 5. irrelevant | E. plot |
| 6. objective | F. way of seeing |

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Social Studies: History of Astrology

Sammy Keyes learns a little about astrology when she spends time with a psychic. Have students use reference books or the Internet to learn about the historical origins of astrology. Students can choose one aspect of astrology to research, such as its country of origin, the people who practiced it, its uses, and so on. Have them report on what they find out to the class.

Science: Kinds of Cats

Various types of cats are in danger in this mystery. Have students research one breed of cat using reference books or the Internet. Ask them to report on the breed they have chosen, describing what it looks like, its special habits, and any other interesting information. Encourage them to show pictures if possible.

Art: Make a Reward Poster

People post reward posters for their missing cats all over town. Have students work with partners to design and create a reward poster for a missing cat. When pairs are finished, hang completed posters around the room.

Health: Wrestling Positions

Professional wrestling is a very different (and less legitimate) sport than wrestling. Have students look in books on sports or on wrestling to find out about the real sport of wrestling. Ask them to write down a description of one hold or position. Students can share the information they find with the rest of 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.

Good Luck Charms

Sammy Keyes gets a good luck horseshoe as a gift. Have students work in pairs to look on the Internet to find the history and meaning of a good luck charm. Students can use the keywords *good luck charm* to find information on charms such as feathers, acorns, horseshoes, and so on. Have pairs report on what they learn to the class.