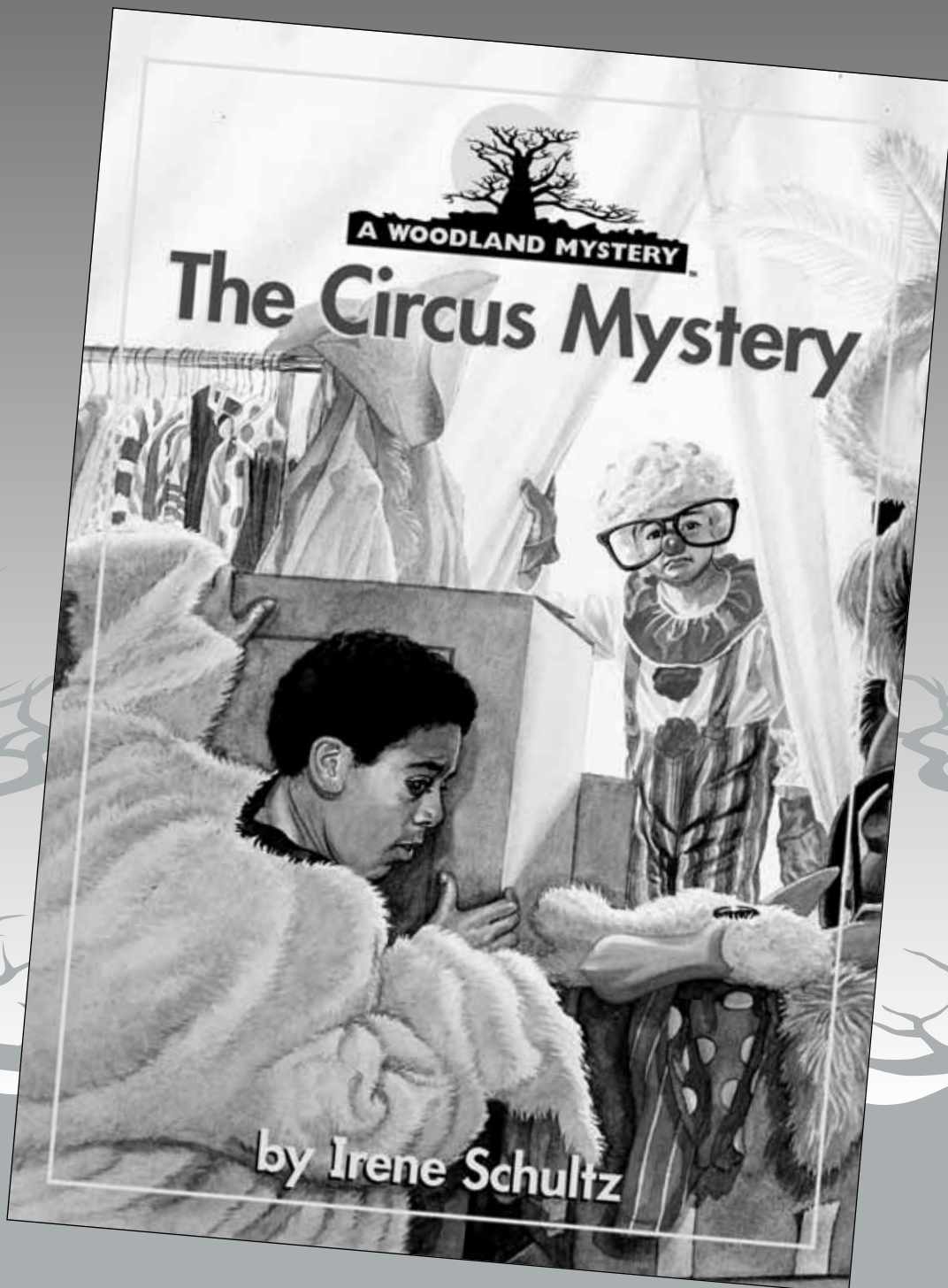


Teacher's Notes and Copy Masters





The Circus Mystery

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Strange things keep happening at the Parker Zoo Farm (a special zoo, housing both wild animals and domestic animals). Animals are escaping from their cages, and, when two former circus animals disappear, the Woodlanders investigate. Who is trying to steal the animals? Enlisting the aid of zoo employees and a former circus clown, the Woodlanders go undercover at a visiting circus to solve the mystery, and catch the crooks!

AUTHOR'S NOTE

"Until a few years ago, a tent circus came to my town, Lake Bluff, every year, a circus not unlike the one in which the Woodlanders got to perform. And the zoo farm was one of the great escapes of my family. I'm ashamed to admit that my son Tony, aided and abetted by me, added a rabbit to the zoo's stock in the way that Sammy did. As for the theft of valuable animals, newspaper articles provided the basis. I suppose everyone who has ever lived in the woods has imagined that an unknown animal could hide there ... even a chimpanzee ... even a pygmy elephant. And I suppose every circus lover has imagined taking part in one somehow."

Irene Schultz

Introducing the Book

- Encourage the children to recall any experiences they may have had at a zoo or circus. List their ideas and discuss ways zoos and circuses are similar or different. Explain that this book is set in a *zoo farm*. Ask why it might be called a zoo farm and what types of animals might be kept in such a place.
- Display the cover of the book and ask what setting this suggests. Encourage the children to draw on information gathered from the front cover, blurb and table of contents to make initial predictions about the story.
- Provide each child with a copy of **Copy Master 1** and discuss how the children could use this during reading.

Directing the Reading

- Have children read the book independently
 - **OR** guide children's reading using questions and discussion points such as those set out below
 - **OR** guide children through early chapters, until they are confident to read on independently.
- **Chapters 1–2** *Was the Parker Zoo Farm the type of place you predicted it would be? How is it different to the circuses and zoos that you know? What "strange things" have happened at the zoo? Why do you think the zoo keepers called them "mysteries"? Who do you think the old man was and why do you think he wrote down the Woodlanders' names?*
 - **Chapters 3–4** *Why would Sammy hide his plan to release Jumper at the zoo farm from the others? Do you think Sammy was acting responsibly? How else might he have dealt with this problem?*
 - **Chapter 5** *Do you think the lion escaping and the disappearance of Coco and Baby were accidents? What makes you say that? Do you think the new zoo worker was involved? Why?*
 - **Chapters 6–7** *What clues did the Woodlanders uncover in these chapters? Who do these clues point to? Which people in the story so far, do you think are the "good guys" and the "crooks"? Why?*
 - **Chapters 8–9** *What evidence was there in this chapter to support Sid McBay's claim that he worked with the circus? Why did Sid McBay think Baby and Coco would be safe with the Woodlanders? What other course of action could he have taken?*
 - **Chapters 10–11** *Why was it important for the Woodlanders to pretend to be clowns in the circus? Do you think the crooks recognised Bill as one of the circus clowns? Why, or why not?*
 - **Chapters 12–13** *Who was stealing the zoo animals? Why? How did this information help Sid McBay and the police develop their plan? Why did the police officer take lots of photographs of the crime scene? What other evidence could the police have used to prove that the "crooks" were guilty?*



SKILLS

- **Homophones** such as *saw/sore; threw/through; there/their/they're*
- **Apostrophes:**
 - contractions such as *I'm, didn't, let's*
 - possessives such as *man's, Dave's, Kathy's*
 - use of *it's/its*
- **Adjectives:**
 - review the function of adjectives
 - identify and use adjectives

BEYOND THE TEXT

- Ask children to work individually or in pairs to create a poster for the circus advertising “The Woodland Clowns”. Encourage them to reread the descriptions of the Woodlanders’ clown outfits in Chapter 10, and to incorporate this information into their design. They can also think of a title for the circus.
- Hold a forum on the topic “Circuses need animal performers” to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using animals in circuses. Children might wish to find out about some contemporary circuses that do not use animal acts.
- Children could write newspaper headlines about an important event in the story.

Expanding Understanding and Reading Critically

- Ask volunteers to retell the main events in the story. Review **Copy Master 1** with the group, and compare the predictions they made before and during their reading with what actually happened.
- The action in this story occurs in several locations. Children could complete **Copy Master 2**.
- Discuss how the author introduces suspense and menace in the story through the presence of the mystery man in the early chapters. The author ends several of the opening chapters by mentioning this man. Discuss why these are called *cliff-hangers*. Ask the children to reread the end of Chapter 2, and discuss the effect this technique has on the reader. Encourage them to skim the early chapters to find other cliff-hangers.
- Children could complete the quiz on **Copy Master 3**.

Skills in Focus

Homophones

- Review the following passage (from page 36) with the children:
Kathy slammed the door hard, just in time. A moment later they saw a huge lion staring at them through the glass at the top of the door. They all held their breath . . .

Challenge the children to find words in this text that sound exactly like other words they know. For example, *saw* (sounds like *sore*), *through* (sounds like *threw*), or *their* (sounds like *there* and *they're*). List the homophones, discussing spelling as you write. Discuss the different meanings and uses of the words. Then ask children to suggest sentences that make the meaning of each homophone clear.

Apostrophes


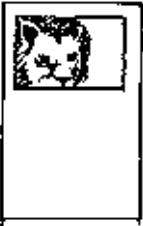


- Ask children to find all the words on pages 74–75 that have apostrophes. Rewrite *the man's voice* as *the voice of the man*. Now rewrite *didn't* as *did not*. Discuss the idea that sometimes the apostrophe is used to show possession, and sometimes it is used to contract two words into one. Through discussion, help the children to classify the other words with apostrophes as **possessives** or **contractions**.

Adjectives

- Remind the children of the function of adjectives. Discuss the idea that adjectives are “describing” words and add interest to a sentence by providing a clearer “picture” in the mind of the reader. Children could then complete **Copy Master 4**.

I Predict...

Name: _____

At the end of...	My predictions	My reasons
Chapter 2 	<i>I predict</i>	
Chapter 5 	<i>I predict</i>	
Chapter 9 	<i>I predict</i>	
Chapter 11 	<i>I predict</i>	

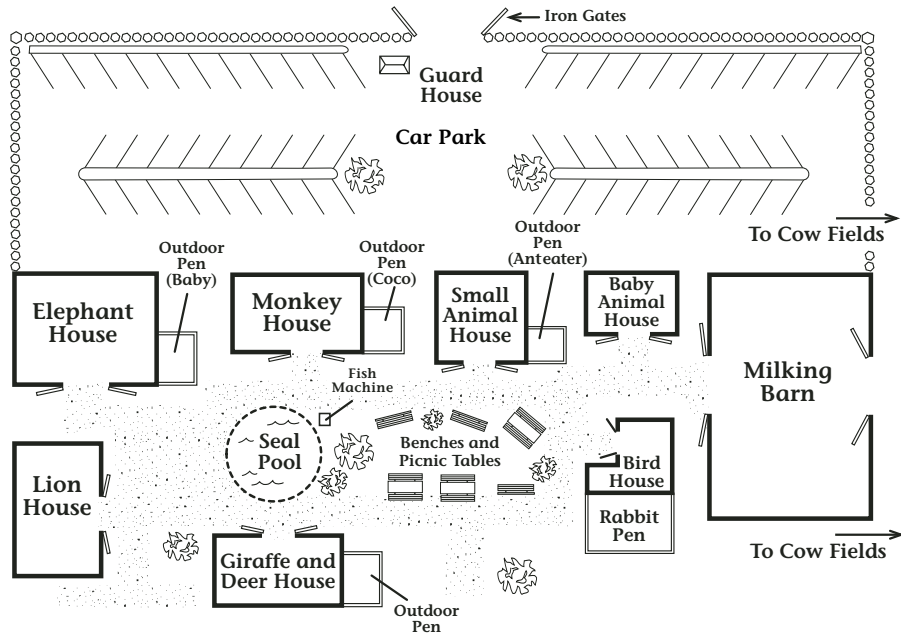
Who really *was* stealing the animals? _____

My predictions were: Perfect Very good Not bad Not even close!

Where Did It Happen?

Name: _____

The Parker Zoo Farm



• Write numbers 1–4 on the map to show where these events occurred.

1. The Woodlanders first heard about the mysterious happenings at the Zoo Farm. (Chapter 2)
2. Sammy let Jumper go in her new home. (Chapter 4)
3. Mrs Tandy found two buttons on the floor. (Chapter 5)
4. The guard wrote down the blue van's number plate. (Chapter 6)

• What part of the Zoo Farm do you think was **least** important in the story? Why? _____

• Name one important event that occurred away from the Zoo Farm.

Why was it important? _____

Try this!

Make a story map showing **all** the places in the story.

Quiz

Name: _____

Read pages 48–49 of *The Circus Mystery*. Then answer these questions.

1. What did the guard at the delivery gate notice?

- a helicopter a van a truck

2. How many people altogether could travel in the helicopter?

- seven six four

3. What was the main reason for using the helicopter in the search?

- It was a fast way to search the main roads.
 The Woodlanders could travel with the chief.
 It could take messages to other police officers.

4. Find this sentence on page 48:

*"I did see a **strange** looking van ... a few minutes after the lion scare this morning."*

Who was speaking?

- Chief Hemster Officer Jordan The Guard

Which word could be used instead of the word **strange** in the sentence above?

- scary mysterious beautiful

5. Find this sentence on page 49:

Sammy cried, "Great! Chief Hemster, there's room for you AND all of us!"

Sammy was:

- angry sad excited

6. Why do you think the chief sent the number plate information to the other police officers?

Looking at Language

Name: _____

1. Choose the correct adjective for each space.

The clowns' costumes were _____.

Who was the _____ stranger in the van?

Coco was _____ to see his _____ friend, Mr McBay.

happily

colourful

mysterious

old

mystery

happy

colour

2. Complete the chart.

angry

silent

quiet

silence

helper

	Noun	Adjective	Noun	Adjective
	happiness		anger	
	child			
		strong		

helpful

happy

childish

stronger

strength

3. Answer these questions. Include some adjectives and underline them.

a) How would you feel if a lion got loose when you were at the zoo?

b) Imagine being in a circus. What would it be like?



The Woodland Mysteries series provides **high interest, low reading level novels** that build reader confidence and develop reading proficiency.

Interest level: Years 5–6
Reading level: Years 3–4

All ten titles in the series are **mystery adventures** featuring the “Woodlanders”, a fun-loving family of five with whom children will readily identify. All texts feature:

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- Background notes from the author
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The Diamond of Doom
The Good-for-Nothing Dog
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Especially written for pupils in Years 5 and 6 who need **Additional Literacy Support (ALS)**. The *Teacher’s Notes* and *Copy Masters* directly support NLS word-level and sentence-level work at the Year 3 and 4 levels.

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