

Detective:
YOU

YOU SOLVE THE MYSTERY

THE GHOST OF OLD CENTRAL SCHOOL

***A CHOOSE
YOUR PATH
MYSTERY!***

**DEB MERCIER
AND RYAN JACOBSON**

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

As you read this book, you'll sometimes be asked to jump to a distant page. Please follow these instructions. Sometimes you'll be asked to choose between two or more options. Decide which you feel is best, and go to the corresponding page. (Be careful: Some options will lead to disaster.) Finally, if a page offers no instructions or choices, simply go to the next page.

Along the way, look for suspects (people who might have committed a crime) and clues. You'll know when you've found an important clue *because it will look like this*. And you'll know when you're on a page that eliminates a suspect because you will see a magnifying glass in the bottom corner, just like the one below.

There are five suspects to find. One of them is behind the evil scheme. So keep track of all the suspects and all the clues because you'll need them to solve this mystery! A good way to do that is by creating a grid (like the one shown on page 7) on a blank piece of paper.

List every suspect, and write down any clues about them. Then cross out their names when you find proof they didn't do it.

GO TO THE NEXT PAGE.



DEDUCTIVE REASONING

Have you heard of Sherlock Holmes? The famous character from books, television, and films is a detective who solves mysteries by using a method known as deductive reasoning.

We all use deductive reasoning. In fact, we use it quite often—and probably don't realize it. "Deductive reasoning" means that we can draw a conclusion based on two or more true statements. Maybe that sounds complicated, but it's not. Check out these examples:

Statement #1: It's dangerous for people who cannot swim to jump into the deep end of the pool.

Statement #2: Barb cannot swim.

Deductive reasoning: It would be dangerous for Barb to jump into the deep end of the pool.

Statement #1: Basketball players get better at their sport by practicing every day.

Statement #2: Larry practices basketball every day.

Deductive reasoning: Larry is getting better at basketball.

Just as Sherlock Holmes does in his stories, you can use deductive reasoning to solve this book's mystery. You might, for example, meet a suspect who has big feet. Then you might find a clue that proves the criminal has tiny feet. Through deductive reasoning, you know the big-footed suspect cannot be the criminal. So you can cross that suspect off your list.

We've already told you that this story's villain will be one of the five suspects. So when you've crossed five names off your list, deductive reasoning tells you that the sixth suspect must be the villain! That is how you'll solve *The Ghost of Old Central School*.

Suspect	Clues	Proof
Deb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lives in Minnesota Enjoys hiking Plays the flute 	
Emily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has dark hair Goes to concerts 	
Ryan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Big and tall Writes books Builds with LEGO 	Criminal is short
Shane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is an artist Is very tall Loves comic books 	Criminal is short

A sample suspect list



WEDNESDAY

4:04 P.M.

Your name on the door says it all: Blaze Bailey, Kid Detective. You've been solving mysteries long enough to know when someone needs your help—and when someone is desperate for it. The tall blonde girl who's standing before you now (an eighth grader, by the looks of it) is definitely desperate.

"Can I help you?" you ask coolly.

She shifts her weight from leg to leg. Her big, brown eyes lock upon her fidgety hands. "I— I— I need your help," she stammers. "And I need it fast."

You stand and step away from your desk.

The office at the back of your parents' garage is small, and on days like today, you wish it were air-conditioned; your T-shirt feels like it's glued to your skin. But at least the garage is a place to call your own. Having an office

has done wonders for business.

“What kind of help?” you say. “Did someone steal your homework? Do you have a secret admirer?” They’re your most common types of cases.

“Nothing like that,” she says shyly. “Have you heard of Old Central School?”

You nod. “Sure, it’s in the middle of town. It’s the one that might be closing.”

“Do you know why they’re going to close it?”

You quietly grind your teeth. It bothers you when you don’t know something, and you don’t know this. “To be honest, I go to Brown,” you confess. “So I’m not sure. I suppose there’s not enough money to keep Old Central running.” It’s the most obvious reason.

“That’s what everybody thinks. They’re not telling people the real reason.”

“Oh, yeah, what’s that?” you ask.

“Do you believe in ghost stories?” she says, finding more confidence.

It’s a strange question, and it catches you off guard. You snort. “No, do you?”

She ignores your question. “Old Central is closing because of the school’s ghost.”

You try not to laugh. “A ghost?”

“That’s why I’m here,” she says. “Well, actually, that’s why my dad sent me.”

“Your dad?” you ask. You don’t often get hired by adults. In fact, you’ve never been hired by an adult.

“It’s complicated,” she says. “The school board meets tomorrow night, and they’re gonna vote to shut down Old Central. Before they do, my dad wants you to prove that someone is sabotaging the school.”

“They’re meeting tomorrow night? You want me to solve this mystery in one day?”

“My dad does,” she corrects. “He can get you into Old Central tonight. Plus, there’s no school tomorrow, so you’ll have all day to look for evidence.”

“That sounds a lot like trespassing—or breaking and entering. It could land me in trouble.”

“Not if my dad is the school’s superintendent,” says the girl. “He can give you permission to be there.”

You always try to play it cool with potential clients, but you can’t hide your surprise. “The superintendent wants to hire me? Why? And why isn’t he here himself? Why did he send you?”

She shrugs. “Like I said, it’s complicated.”

“I need more of an explanation than that.”

She sighs deeply. “My dad can’t be involved—not

officially. Getting private detectives wrapped up in this mess could damage his reputation and ruin his career.”

Now it’s your turn to sigh. “So I have his permission, but if I get caught . . .”

“Then you’re on your own,” she finishes.

You don’t say a word. You stay quiet until the long, awkward silence becomes more than she can bear.

Finally, she asks, “What do you think? Will you take the case?”

WHAT WILL YOU CHOOSE TO DO?

Take the case.

GO TO PAGE 58.

Turn down the case

GO TO PAGE 43.

“Ever since I started going to Old Central, I’ve heard ghost stories about it,” Irene tells you. “The big rumor now is that it’s haunted by a student from the 1990s.”

You try not to roll your eyes as you wipe the sweat from your brow.

“She was all alone in the first-floor girls’ bathroom,” Irene continues. “She was looking at herself in the mirror, and her reflection somehow came to life. It reached out and grabbed her, and it pulled her entire body inside the mirror. She was never seen again, but her ghost is said to haunt Old Central. Pretty scary, huh?”

You chuckle. “Not really. Even if I did believe in ghosts, that story can’t be true.”

“Why not?” asks Irene.

“Because you said she was alone.”

Irene tilts her head and squints. “So?”

“If that story really happened,” you say, “and if the student was alone, how would anyone know about it?”

She stares at you blankly.

“You said she was pulled into the mirror,” you note. “If no one else was with her, how would anyone know she got pulled into the mirror?”

At last, Irene smiles. “Oh, I see. How could there be a story if no one saw it and she never came back to tell it?”

You nod. “Exactly.”

“But there’s still a lot of other stuff,” Irene insists.

“Like what?” you say.

“Strangely enough, it began inside that same girls’ bathroom. Students complained about cold spots in front of the mirror. After that, things started to disappear. Kids lost pencils and notebooks, and teachers had their lesson plans taken. Chairs vanished, too.”

“It could have been a thief,” you say.

“Maybe, but the weird thing is a lot of the missing items showed up again a few days later—right before more stuff went missing.”

“What else can you tell me?” you ask.

“Before and after school, we heard strange noises, like moans and chains and things.”

“Where?”

“Everywhere. Then the lights started turning on and off, especially in the sixth-grade classrooms. And a creepy mist was seen floating through the gym.”

Your head bobs as you say, “I’ve got it: cold spots, disappearing items, spooky noises, lights flickering, and a strange mist. Sounds pretty harmless. Anything else?”

“A bunch of students reported seeing a shadowy, dark figure roaming through the auditorium. It chased

them into the hallway and scared them so much that they refused to come back to school. The whole thing caused a panic. A lot of parents are moving their kids into different schools, and Old Central will be forced to close.”

“So if I can prove these happenings are fake,” you conclude, “the students come back to Old Central, it stays open . . . and your dad keeps his job.”

“Right,” Irene says.

“It looks like the next 24 hours are going to be busy. I need to pay Old Central a visit. But first, tell me about our number-one suspect.”

“Who’s that?” Irene asks, looking confused.

“The only person who can go anywhere in the school without creating suspicion: the principal.”

GO TO THE NEXT PAGE.

You smile. “Yes, I’ll take it.”

“Thank you!” she exclaims. She starts forward as if to hug you. She stops, apparently changing her mind. Good thing—it’s way too hot for hugging.

“What happens next?” she asks.

“For starters, you can tell me your name.”

“Oh, sorry. I’m Irene Gorter.”

“Nice to meet you, Irene. I’ll need to pack supplies for the case. In the meantime, tell me everything you can about your school’s ghost.”

Irene nods eagerly, and as you begin to fill your detective bag, she shares quite a tale.

GO TO THE NEXT PAGE.

Use a blank sheet of paper to create a suspect grid, as shown on page 7. Then choose five items from the list below to carry with you during the investigation. Note these items on the back of your paper.

Camera: Being a detective isn't just about learning the truth. You'll have to prove it. A picture of the "ghost" might be the evidence you need.

Mobile phone (no camera): Reception is poor inside Old Central. But if you get into trouble and if you can get your mobile phone to work, it might save your life.

First aid kit: Serious cuts and bruises may keep you from finishing your investigation. A first aid kit is the only way to ensure that doesn't happen.

Flashlight: You never know what dark corners of the school you'll discover. A flashlight could help you find a clue that you otherwise would have missed.

Skeleton key: Locked door? No problem. Investigate any room in the old school with a skeleton key that opens every lock.

Pepper Spray: Defend yourself against criminals with a canister of pepper spray. Simply spray this into an attacker's face—and then run for it.

Pocketknife: This handy little trinket is for cutting, prying, and countless other uses. You may need it to open a box—or who can guess what else?

Rope: You never know when you'll need a rope. It's ideal for climbing in and out of deep holes, setting traps, and tying up villains.

Voice Recorder: A recorded confession might be as good as a photograph of evidence. Keep your recorder close, in case you hear a “ghost.”

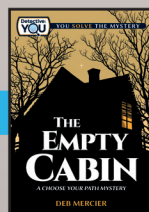
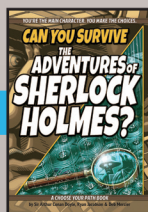
**CHOOSE FIVE ITEMS,
THEN GO TO PAGE 20.**



Old Central School is closing for good because it's said to be haunted! The incidents have gotten so eerie and disturbing that parents refuse to send their kids. Yet Irene Gorter, a student at Old Central, doesn't believe it's true—and she's hiring you to prove it.

You're the detective. Dig into this mystery, and uncover a slate of shady suspects. Gather clues, navigate puzzles, crack secret codes, and make choices that affect what happens next. By using deductive reasoning, you'll get closer to the truth with each turn of the page. Will you solve the case?

SURVIVE & SOLVE!



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JUVENILE FICTION/MYSTERY

ISBN 978-1-940647-75-3

