

Mystery #1: Counting Socks

Sometimes the biggest mysteries are simply how we manage to get through life. At our house every day can be a little adventure.

Like the other day, Mom was trying to get Alley off to school. Tony was staying home from school because he was sick. We all had to be quiet because Mom didn't want him to wake up again. He had been up most of the night. The problem was that she needed a pair of socks.

"Why's that a problem?" I asked.

"Well, I was folding laundry in Tony's room and I left all of Alley's socks in there."

"Do you want me to go get them for you?"

"Yes, but don't turn on the light. I don't want you to wake Tony up. Don't try to lift the basket; you'll just spill something. He'll hear you, and he just managed to fall back to sleep. Just go in quietly and bring out a pair of socks."

"That sounds easy enough."

"Well," Mom said, "there's another problem."

And she explained. All of Alley's socks were green or pink, her two favorite colors. Mom hadn't gotten around to sorting any of the socks so the laundry basket was full of 24 socks: 12 pink socks and 12 green socks.

"So you have to go in there in the dark and grab enough socks to make sure you get a pair. Can you do that?"

"I think I can manage, Mom."

I sneaked into the room and found the laundry basket. I felt around, picked out the socks and came back out of the room. How many socks did I have to bring out to make sure that I had two the same color?



Mystery #2: Your Number's Up



The principal of our school picked ten children from our class to take a special test on Saturday. He gave us the time and told us which building we had to go to downtown. A little later in the day, he called me to the office and asked me to let everyone know we should go to room 69 to take the test.

Roberto, a smart aleck in our class, was one of the students chosen to take the test. I was rather looking forward to it, but out on the playground Roberto was laughing and complaining about the test. I told him where we were supposed to go to take the test. He looked down at the piece of paper I was holding with the number of the room on it.

"I don't want to take part of a Saturday to do more school stuff."

He did have a point, but I didn't mind.

On Saturday, nine students showed up at room 69 to take the test. We waited for a while, but Roberto never showed up. The rest of us took the test—some kind of IQ test that most of us thought was fun.

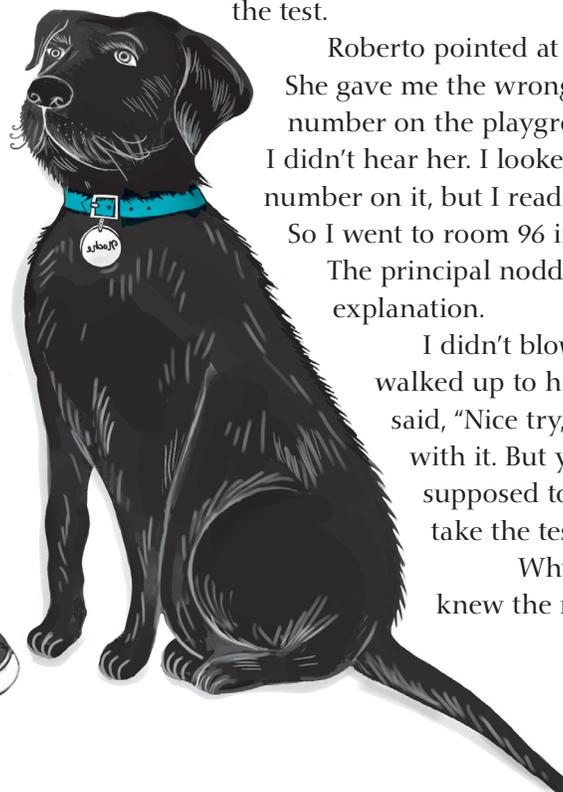
At school on Monday, the principal came down to our classroom and asked Roberto why he hadn't shown up for the test.

Roberto pointed at me. "It was Bella's fault. She gave me the wrong number. She told me the number on the playground, but it was so noisy I didn't hear her. I looked at the paper with the number on it, but I read the number upside down. So I went to room 96 instead of 69."

The principal nodded and accepted his explanation.

I didn't blow Roberto's excuse, but I walked up to him on the playground and said, "Nice try, Roberto. You got away with it. But you knew where you were supposed to go. You just didn't want to take the test."

Why was I so sure that Roberto knew the real room number?



Mystery #3: A Haul at the Mall



I was shopping in the mall one day when I heard a loud scream. It was coming from a store that sold candles and novelties. I ran into the store and at first didn't see anyone. Then, as I walked around the counter, I saw a young woman lying on the floor. She was wearing a bright red top, jeans and clogs. She had a badge on her chest that identified her as Sandy.

I bent over and shook her. Her eyes popped right open and she stared up at me. "Did they get the money?" she asked.

I helped her up and she held her head. Just then her manager came running into the store. "What happened, Sandy?" she asked.

The cash register drawer was open and all the money was gone.

We got Sandy a chair to sit down in. "It happened so fast," she said. "Someone came in and hit me on the head and took the money." When we checked, it looked like whoever it was left by the back door.

A few days later, I was called down to the police station to give a report of what had happened. Sandy was there, too. She was dressed much more casually than when I had seen her last: she was wearing a T-shirt, tennis shoes and jeans. Obviously, she wasn't working that day.

When the policeman asked us what had happened, we both told him our stories. Then he paused and asked Sandy why she hadn't seen the person come into the store.

"Well, I bent over to tie my shoes, and the next thing I knew they hit me on the head. Ask Bella. When she came in, I was still lying on the floor, unconscious."

I had to agree with her about the lying part. I told the policeman what I knew, and Sandy had to give the money back. What had given her away?

Solution to Mystery #1:

Three socks will do it, because all possible combinations include a pair: three pinks, three greens, two pinks and a green, two greens and a pink.

Solution to Mystery #2:

Because 69 upside down is still 69—not 96. Roberto heard and saw the right number and just chose not to go.

Solution to Mystery #3:

She was wearing clogs the day of the robbery. She wouldn't have bent over to tie her shoelaces, since they don't have any.

