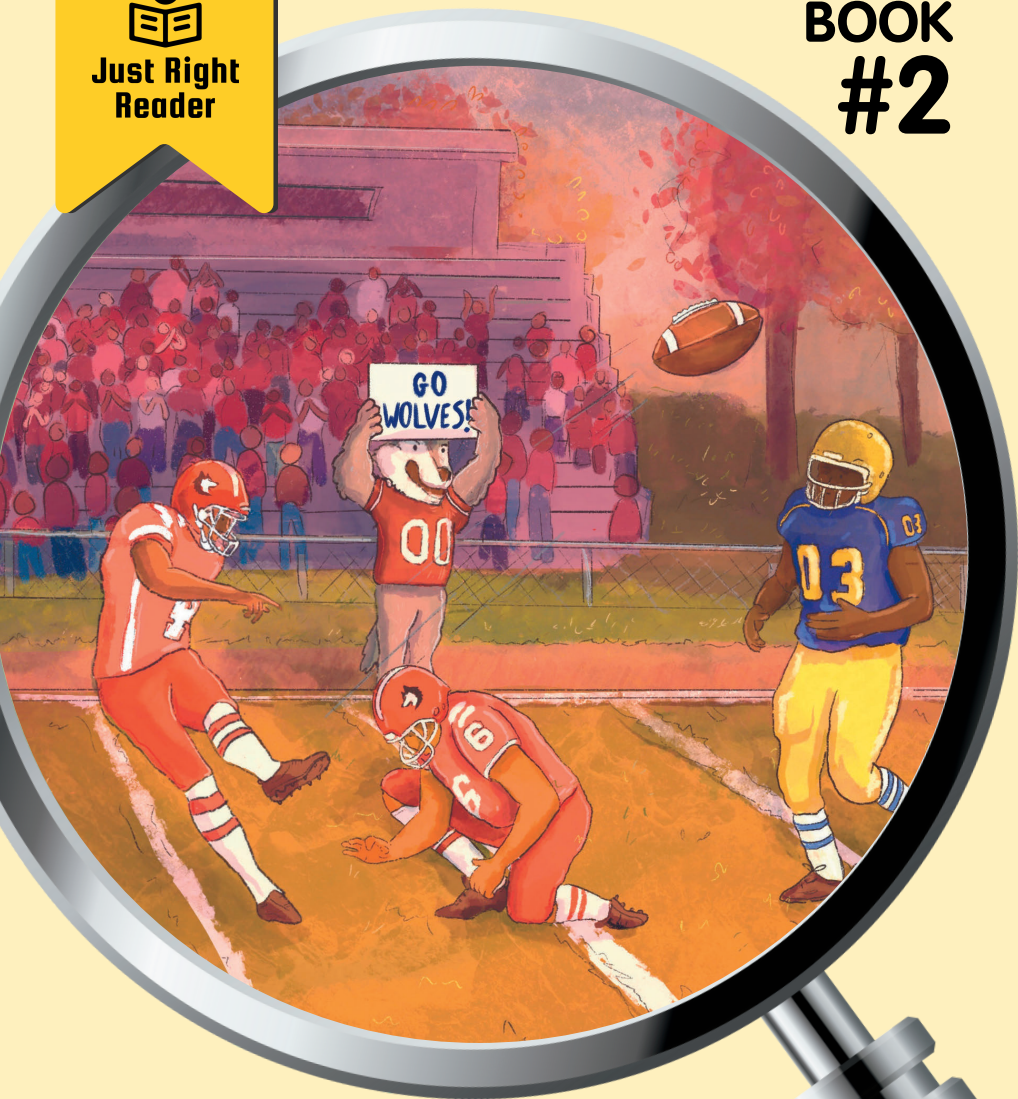




Just Right
Reader

BOOK
#2



NEXT-DOOR DETECTIVE AGENCY

The Case of the Mysterious Mascot

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1

Which Wolf?

Olivia and Dante loved going to high school football games. Mostly because of Lenny.

Lenny was Olivia's cousin. He was also the team's **mascot**. Every game, he wore a wolf costume. His job was to get the crowd cheering and excited.

And he was great at his job! In fact, he was the best mascot they'd ever had. And definitely the most energetic!

But tonight, Lenny was home with a cold.

Olivia followed Dante up the steps of the **bleachers**. They always sat next to Dante's older brother, Todd. He waved them over.

"Did Lenny tell you about Sam?" Todd asked Olivia.

Sam was Todd and Lenny's best friend. He was the kicker for the football team.

Sam was one of the kindest people Olivia knew. So she tried to cheer hardest when he was on the field.

She shook her head. "What?"

Todd sighed. "Sam's off the team. The coaches said he didn't try hard enough. That he didn't care about the team. He's really upset."

Olivia frowned. That didn't sound like Sam.

A loud BUZZ filled the air. The game was starting. She stood up to cheer.

But she couldn't believe her eyes.

A wolf stood on the field. Dressed in the same costume Lenny always wore.

"Isn't Lenny sick? Who is that?" Dante asked.

"I don't know," Olivia said. She turned around to her mom, sitting in the row behind her. "Mom, can you call Lenny?"

Olivia's mom dialed Lenny and then held out her phone. She put it on speaker so everyone could hear. Lenny picked up.

"Hi Lenny! You're at home, right?" Olivia asked him.



"Yep," Lenny said. He coughed. "Why?"

"Someone is wearing your wolf costume!" she said.

The wolf jumped and cheered. Her heart skipped a beat. There had to be a **mistake**. Maybe Lenny asked someone to fill in for him.

“Sounds like a case for the unlikely detectives,”
Lenny said.

Olivia gulped. This wasn't good. Not at all.

2

Hidden in Plain Sight

Dante's eyes lit up. "It's our next case!"

So they watched the wolf's every move.



They looked for anything unusual. Anything that might give away the person's **identity**.

But all they saw was a great mascot. It led the **loudest** chants. It got everyone on their feet. But it wasn't Lenny.

Olivia was worried. What if he got in trouble for this? What if he couldn't be the mascot anymore?

She needed to find out who it was. Fast.

"Follow me," she said to Dante. "I know where we can start looking for clues."

They slipped out of the stands. The noise of the game faded **away**. Dante followed Olivia to a building right next to the field. It was labeled "Storage Room."

"This is where Lenny usually stores the wolf costume," she explained. "I help him put it away after each game."

Olivia pushed on the door. It opened with a **dramatic** creak.



Olivia pointed to an empty shelf. “The costume should be right there. Look around. Maybe we’ll find a clue.”

But all they found was a book. It was on the floor near the shelf. It looked like someone had tossed it aside in a hurry.

Olivia picked it up.

"I know this book. It's a mystery," she said. "I read it last year. It's pretty good."

She flipped open the book. Someone had written their name there.

Olivia read the name, "SAM." She smiled.

"Sam must have left this here. He likes mysteries too," she said.

"Too bad he's not here to help us solve this one," Dante said.

Olivia flipped to the middle of the book.

"Wait," she said. "I know this story. It's called 'The Trojan Horse.'"

"That's the one about those soldiers who hide inside a big wooden horse," said Dante.

"Right!" Olivia said. "They sneak inside a walled city and . . ."

Her voice trailed off. She bit her lip.

Dante nodded. He was thinking the same thing she was.



"Someone is hiding inside the wolf costume," he said slowly. "And they snuck into the game. Just like the story."

"Quick!" Olivia said. "We have to get back before the game ends!"

She had a good idea who was in the costume. She just didn't know why.

3

The Mysterious Mascot

They got back with one minute left in the game. Olivia couldn't have **predicted** what she saw on the field.

The two teams' mascots were working together! The crowd cheered their **hardest**.

BUZZ! The game was over. The Wolves had won! The crowd streamed down onto the field. They were filled with excitement. It was the Wolves' **biggest** win in a long time.





Olivia ran right over to the wolf mascot. Dante was just steps behind her.

"Hey," Olivia called out. The wolf mascot turned to look at her.

"We want to show you something," Dante said.



Olivia **presented** the book to the mascot.

"I think you dropped this, Sam," she said.

The wolf took off its mask.

"How did you know it was me?" Sam panted. Beads of sweat ran down his face.

Olivia smiled. "The Trojan horse story. Instead of a horse, you hid inside a wolf costume."

Sam grinned. "Lenny is the **greatest**. He let me borrow the costume."

"But why?" Dante asked. "You were kicked off the team."

Dante stopped when they heard footsteps behind them. They turned to see the football coach. He looked shocked.

"Sam?" he said, his eyes wide.

Sam dropped his chin. "Hi, Coach," he said softly.

"What are you doing here?" the coach asked. His face had turned **serious**.

Sam lifted his head. "I couldn't miss this game. I care too much about the team," Sam said. "I wanted to help somehow. Even if I wasn't the kicker."

The coach put a hand **atop** Sam's shoulder. "I **misjudged** you," he said. He smiled at Sam. "I'm sorry. You've shown more spirit today than I've seen in a long time. You're back on the team, Sam. We need that kind of heart."

Sam's eyes lit up. A joyous grin spread across his face. "Really? Thank you! I won't let you down!"

The coach left. Sam turned to Olivia and Dante.

"You two are a **dynamic** duo! I should have known you'd figure it out," he said.

Olivia and Dante grinned at each other. Then, Sam's phone buzzed. It was Lenny. Sam answered. He put the phone on speaker.

"So," they heard Lenny's voice on the phone. "Have you solved the mystery yet?" he said.

Olivia chuckled. "You knew all along!"

"I did," he said. "But I also knew you'd figure it out. And I wanted Coach to know how much Sam cares about the team."

He coughed. "Good job, detectives," he said.

After they hung up, Sam ran ahead to tell his teammates the good news.

As Sam and Olivia walked off the field together, Olivia thought about the day. They had solved a mystery. They'd also helped Sam get back on the team. That was the **greatest** feeling of all.



Glossary

bleacher

a bench or place to sit at a sports event

dynamic

full of positive energy

identity

who a person is

mascot

a person, animal, or object that cheers for a team or group

Set 52

Phonics Skills

Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes

Word Part	Meaning	Example in Text
a-	not OR in a state or way of being	aside
mis-	wrongly	mistake
pre-	before	predicted
-est	most	greatest
-ic	like or relating to	energetic
-ous	full of	joyous



Scan this QR code to watch a video about the book!



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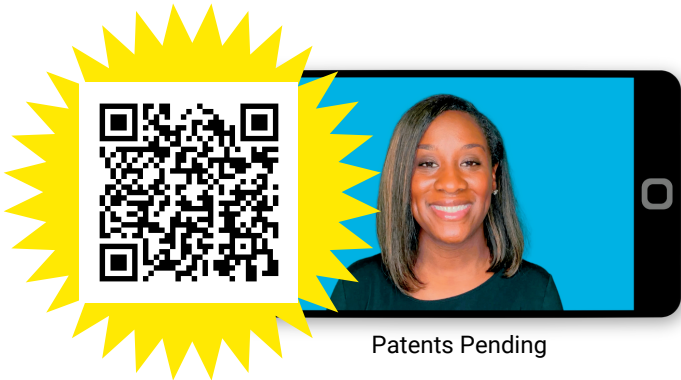
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