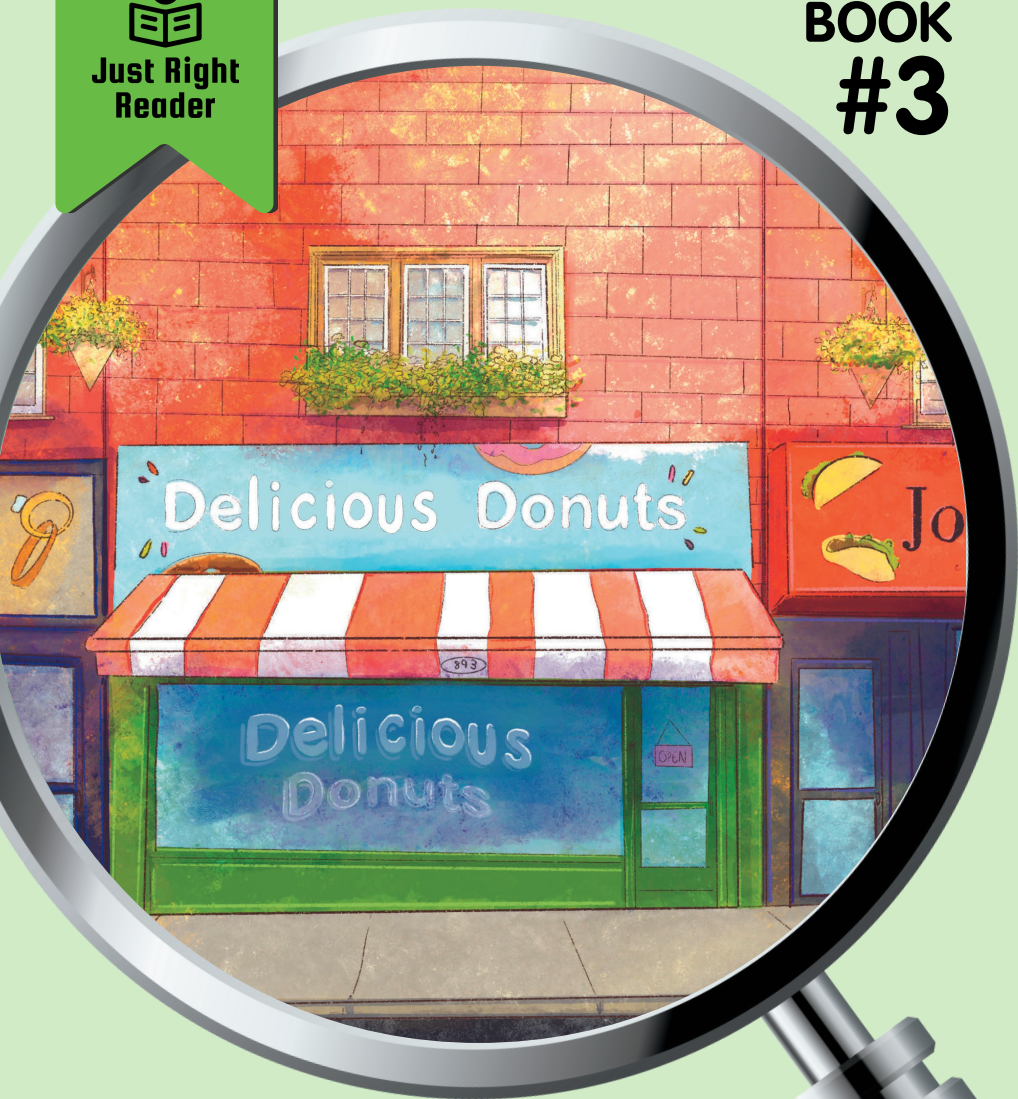




Just Right
Reader

BOOK
#3



NEXT-DOOR DETECTIVE AGENCY

The Case of the Disappearing Donuts

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1

A Real Mystery

Olivia stood under a tree in the park. She was looking forward to a normal day. A **non-mystery** day.



A minute later, she spotted Dante. She waved **eagerly** to him and smiled.

Dante didn't smile back.

"Have you seen Todd?" he asked. Todd was his older brother.

Olivia saw him and pointed. Todd stood in front of their favorite donut shop, Delicious Donuts. A girl in an apron stood next to him. Both had worried **expressions**.

"Is everything okay?" Olivia asked.

Dante frowned. "I don't know. Todd said to come as fast as I could."

They jogged over to Todd. He introduced them to his friend, Anne.

Anne twisted her apron **nervously**. "Todd says you are pretty good detectives. I could use your help solving a mystery."

Olivia smiled. This wouldn't be a normal day after all! She nodded **slowly**. Of course they would help.

"Come inside," Anne said. "I can explain while I make the rest of the donuts."



A bell chimed overhead as they walked through the door. The smell of fresh donuts filled the shop.

"I work here on weekends," Anne said. "Alma's the owner. But she's gone this weekend. So she left me in charge."

Anne pointed to an empty tray in the display case. "Yesterday, I brought the first batch of donuts out. Then, I went to make another batch. When I came out again, a dozen donuts were gone!"

She threw her hands up. "This morning, the same thing happened."

Olivia asked, "Are you the only one here?"

Anne nodded. "I think so. I've heard some unusual noises. But it's an old building. It could be the pipes or something."

Dante pointed at a door in the back wall. "Where does that go?"

"I don't really know," Anne said. "It's always locked. Someone lives upstairs. But I've never seen them in the shop."

"Can we look around?" Olivia asked. "For clues?"

Anne nodded. "I'll go make more donuts."

Todd turned to them. "I've got to run to the library," he said. "I'll be back later. Good luck!"

Dante looked at Olivia. His eyes glowed with excitement. "This is so cool," he said. "A real mystery."

That's what made Olivia's heart race. This was real. Anne could lose her job.

She took a deep breath. Somehow, they had to make sure that didn't happen.

2

Definitely Not a Raccoon

They began by searching the store. They examined the display case. They opened the drawers. They studied the floors.

They found nothing. **Except** for a gray feather.

Dante picked it up. "Maybe a bird flew in! And it stole the donuts!"

Olivia looked in the trash can. "**Nonsense**. How could a little bird carry a dozen donuts?" she asked.

Dante scratched his head. "Okay, good point. But it could still be a clue." He put it in his pocket.

Twenty minutes later, they still had no leads.

"Maybe someone snuck in from outside?" Dante asked.



Olivia pointed to the bell above the door. "The bell would ring. Anne would have heard them."

She made her hands look like claws. "Maybe it's a raccoon! They're sneaky!"

Dante grinned. "Smart raccoon! I'd want these donuts too. They smell so good."



Dante was right. The smell of warm donuts was making Olivia hungry.

"Let's go see what Anne is making," said Olivia.

In the back room, Anne was hard at work. A large tub of dough sat next to the fryer. Oil slowly bubbled in a pot. Buckets of frosting and sprinkles sat on the counter.

Anne handed them hair nets and gloves.

“Want a fresh donut?” said Anne. “They’re really good when they are warm.”

Anne grabbed a donut with her **tongs**. That’s when Olivia spotted something. A note. It was tucked under the tub of dough.

“Watch for Feathers,” she read.

Dante pulled the feather from his pocket. “Well, we did find this in the store. But I don’t know what—”

At that moment, a high, screechy voice filled the air.

Anne froze. Dante’s eyes widened. Olivia whirled around. There was no one else in the room.

“That wasn’t a raccoon,” Dante said.

“That’s the noise I’ve been hearing!” Anne said **excitedly**. “I thought it was my **imagination**. But you both heard it too, right?”

“Donuts!” the high voice said. There was another screech.

At that moment, there was a sound in the front room. They all looked toward the door.

Footsteps.

Olivia's heart pounded. "It's time to find out who is taking the donuts," she said.



3

Watch for Feathers

Olivia took a deep breath. She grabbed the doorknob. **Slowly**, she twisted it.

Instead of being locked, the door opened a crack. Olivia poked her head out. The room was silent. **Completely** silent. Her heart pounded.

Suddenly, the door flew open by itself.

“AAAH!” Olivia **ex**claimed.

She lost her balance and stumbled into the front room.

“Donuts!” said the high, screechy voice. It was closer now. It was right behind her!

Olivia took a shaky breath and turned around.

An older woman stood near the door. Her eyebrows dipped in confusion. “Where’s Alma?” she asked.

A gray parrot sat on her shoulder. It stared at Olivia with beady eyes.

Dante and Anne rushed into the room.

“What’s all the **commotion**?” asked Anne.

“Who are you?” Dante asked loudly.

“I’m Mrs. Williams,” the woman said. She **craned** her neck to look past Anne. “Is Alma here?”

Anne’s eyes narrowed. “Wait! You’re the woman who lives upstairs.”

Mrs. Williams smiled. “Yes, dear,” she said. “I don’t usually come down to the shop this late. But Feathers has had quite an **appetite** this weekend. Would it be too much trouble to get a few more donuts for him?”

“Donuts!” the parrot squawked. It shook its head. A small feather fell to the floor.

“Did you say ‘Feathers’?” Dante asked. He stared at the parrot.



Mrs. Williams looked confused. "Yes, this is Feathers. He loves donuts. Alma invites us to take a few every morning. I'm sorry, dear," she said, looking at Anne again. "Didn't Alma tell you?"

Anne let out a long breath. "A parrot! That's the noise I've been hearing!"

Mrs. Williams pointed at the vent in the ceiling. "I'm afraid sound travels easily through these vents," she said. "So does the smell of your wonderful donuts."

"Donuts!" Feathers squawked.

Olivia pulled out the note. "Watch for Feathers!" She laughed. "Now, it makes sense."

Feathers squawked happily. He flapped his wings. Another feather floated down.

Anne disappeared quickly into the back room. She came back with a box. She extended it to Mrs. Williams.

"For Feathers," Anne said.

Mrs. Williams opened the box. "I think it would only be polite to share. Right, Feathers?"

She passed the box around. Everyone took one. Even Feathers.

Just then, the bell above the door rang. Todd walked into the shop.

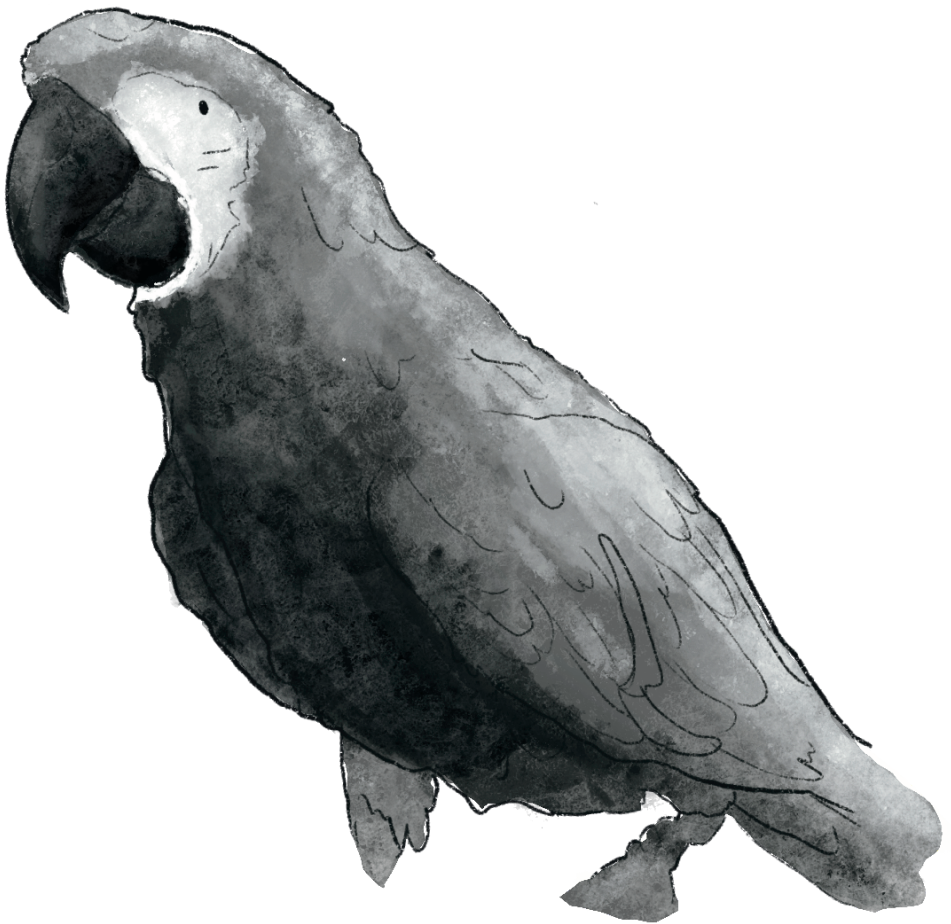
"You're just in time!" said Anne.

"For what?" Todd asked.

"Donuts!" Feathers squawked.

The group laughed. Olivia took a bite of her donut. She was glad that they'd solved the mystery. Anne's job was safe.

She looked at Dante. Todd was right. They were pretty good detectives!



Glossary

commotion	a lot of noise and confusion
crane	to stretch out your neck to see better
expression	the look on someone's face that shows how they're feeling
tongs	a tool used to grab something

Set 53

Phonics Skills

Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes

Word Part	Meaning	Example in Text
co-/con-/com-	with or thoroughly	commotion
ex-	out of	except
non-	not	nonsense
-ion	act or state of	imagination
-ite	of the nature of	favorite
-ly	in a manner of	slowly



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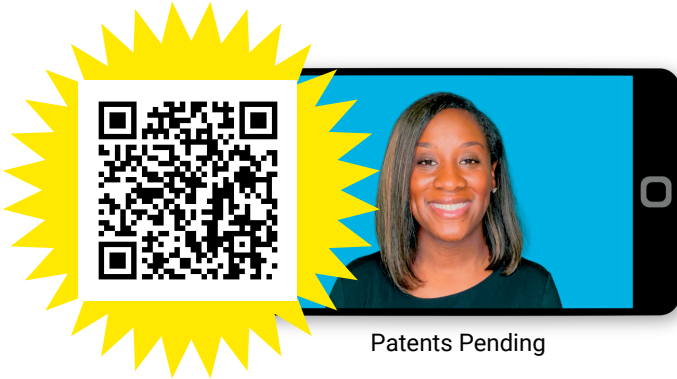
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