

Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Compare and Contrast

Read the short story and answer each question.



The Missing Model Ship

Elliot knew every shelf in Mr. Flanagan's antique shop. Every dusty telescope, every faded photograph, every creaky drawer. But last Saturday, something was missing—the silver model ship that usually sat in the front window. "Did you move it?" Elliot asked. Mr. Flanagan shook his head. "Strangest thing. I locked the doors last night, and it was gone this morning." Elliot studied the shop like a detective. Nothing else was missing. No broken locks. No footprints. Then he noticed something new—tiny wood shavings near the back door. He crouched low. "These weren't here before." Mr. Flanagan leaned closer. "Termites?" "No. Too clean. Look." Elliot pointed to a narrow trail leading under a loose floorboard. Beneath it sat a nest—made of string, cloth scraps... and silver foil. "Someone built a nest with pieces of the ship," Elliot whispered. A tiny mouse squeaked from the shadows. Mr. Flanagan laughed. "I guess the thief was four inches tall." They left the nest untouched and placed a new note in the window: *Now Featuring the World's Smallest Pirate.*

The Puzzle in the Paint

When Jia's art teacher asked her to clean the supply closet, she didn't expect to find a mystery. Tucked behind old canvases, she discovered a painting of a lake at sunset—deep blues, streaks of gold. It was beautiful... but unsigned. Jia asked the teacher, who shrugged. "It's been there for years. I assumed it was leftover from a former student." Jia was curious. She checked the back. In faded pencil: #27 - *Hidden Reflections*. That night, she brought the painting home. Under a lamp, she noticed something strange—tiny numbers were hidden in the water's ripples. She jotted them down: 7 - 2 - 9 - 4. At school the next day, she checked the art class cubbies. Number 27 was still labeled: "Anna Lin - 2016." Jia visited the office and found an old newsletter about Anna, who had won a state art award before leaving the school. Later, she placed the painting back in the closet, but with a new label: *By Anna Lin. Winner of Hidden Reflections, 2016.* "Even a mystery deserves a proper signature," Jia whispered.



Name: _____

The Missing Model Ship & The Puzzle in the Paint

1. How do both stories show the importance of observation?

- A. Both main characters solve a mystery by noticing small details others ignored.
- B. Both characters decide to give up and walk away.
- C. Each story focuses on solving crimes using security cameras.
- D. Each story uses animals to uncover clues.

2. How are the characters' approaches to solving their mysteries different?

- A. Elliot focuses on a real-time clue and setting, while Jia researches a mystery from the past using hidden patterns.
- B. Jia catches a thief in action, while Elliot relies only on memory.
- C. Elliot uses math and art, while Jia follows footprints in the snow.
- D. Both rely only on help from adults to solve the mystery.

3. Fill in the blank:

In *The Puzzle in the Paint*, Jia discovers a hidden message inside the _____.

4. What role does careful observation play in both mysteries, and how does it affect the outcomes?

5. Which story's mystery felt more surprising to you, and why?



Parent and Teacher Guide

Guide Reading Level: T

Lexile Level: 900L-1050L

Grade Level: 5th Grade, Beginning of the Year

Genre: Mystery

Introducing the Text

“In these two mysteries, different characters solve puzzles by paying attention to clues that others overlook. As students read, they will compare how each character uses observation to reach a conclusion, and how the authors use small details to build suspense and solve the mystery.”

Vocabulary: foreshadowing, observation, detail, clue, pattern

Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What makes a mystery fun or exciting to read?
 2. How do small details or clues help a character solve a mystery?
 3. Have you ever solved a mystery by noticing something others didn't?
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During Reading Discussion Questions

1. How does Elliot notice something others miss in the antique shop?
 2. What clues help Jia uncover the artist's identity?
 3. What are some similarities in how each story builds suspense?
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After Reading Discussion Questions

1. How do the characters' actions reflect the theme of close observation?
 2. What is different about the way each mystery is solved?
 3. What message might both stories share about looking closely at the world around you?
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Activity Idea

Invite students to create their own short mystery story based on a setting they know well (e.g., a classroom, a library, a park). Ask them to hide one key clue in a small detail, then share their story and let classmates guess what the hidden clue is.

