



Lark Holds the Key

Natasha Deen

Illustrated by Marcus Cutler

978-1-4598-0727-3

About the Book

It's the third day of summer vacation, and Lark's *halmoni*—that's Korean for grandmother—has promised to take Lark and her twin brother, Connor, to the library. Only trouble is, they arrive to discover that the town librarian is missing her key to the library. Lucky for her, Lark just happens to be a budding private eye. Can rookie detectives Lark and Connor solve this mystery and recover the lost key?

Lark Holds the Key is the first book in the Lark Ba detective series.

About the Author

Natasha Deen's family moved from Guyana, South America to Calgary, Alberta, which she found terribly exciting—until she met her first minus-forty-degree winter day, at which point she began to question the sanity of the grown-ups around her. She studied psychology at university, and once she learned of the physiological and psychological benefits of writing and story, her career was set. Natasha writes for children, teens and adults, and her recent books include *Across the Floor*, *Lark Holds the Key* and *Sleight of Hand* (CCBC Best Picks for Kids and Teens, starred selection). Visit her at www.natashadeen.com.

About the Writing

When Natasha was younger, she was always losing her house key (well, not always, but it sure felt like that to her mom and dad!). She tried to be responsible and keep it in her pocket or her school bag, but keys are tricky things and they like to escape when they can. Her experience prompted her to write *Lark Holds the Key*, except in Lark and Connor's case, it's the grown-up who has lost the key. And it's up to the twins to save the day!

Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections

Prereading Ideas

- *Lark Holds the Key* is a mystery-adventure starring a brother and sister team of sleuths. How many kids in the class have a brother or sister? Are they older or younger? What kinds of adventures have they had together?
- What are the characteristics of a mystery?
- Has a student in the class ever lost something? What was it? How did they find it?
- Can students think of a time they helped a grown-up solve a problem?
- Mrs. Robinson, the librarian, has lost the key to the library. If the library is closed for the day, how might that affect the townspeople?
- There are certain behaviors that are against the law, like breaking into someone's house or car. Can you think of a situation where it would be okay to break this rule?

Classroom Discussion Questions

1. Lark has dyslexia which means her brain processes sounds and text differently. What are some of the things she does to help herself when it comes to reading?
2. Lark and Connor don't always understand the turns of phrases that grown-ups use (like "upping the ante"). Can students come up with other idiomatic language that Lark and Connor may not understand?
3. Slang is rooted in culture. Do students know any slang phrases from their culture that North Americans may not understand? (In Guyana, for example, the phrase "catch your bed" means to go to sleep.)
4. As well as helping Mrs. Robinson to find the lost key, Lark and Connor do a few other things to help the librarian feel better. What are some of those things?
5. In chapter 9, do you think Sophie's joke about Baa Baa Lark sheep is funny? Why or why not?

Suggested Activities

- Have students break into groups and hide something fun or unusual (a toy dinosaur, a key) somewhere in the classroom. Then have them come up with 3-5 clues and choose two students who are not part of that group to find the hidden treasure.
- Visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWW8CSfFvf4 for instructions on how to make an origami crocodile. Can students find what the differences between an alligator and a crocodile are?
- Visit www.clker.com/clipart-golden-key-outline.html for a free clipart image of a key. Have students write inside of the outline what they think makes for a good detective (observation, listening), then hang the keys around the classroom.
- Lark and Connor are biracial. Ask the students which parts of the world their family and ancestors came from. Then have them draw the maps of those countries and hang them around the room. (For older students, a second part of the activity can involve finding out three interesting things about the country and telling the class.)

Other Titles of Interest

Adventures at Camp Lots-o-Fun by Marilyn Helmer

Bagels on Board by Joan Betty Stuchner

Justine McKeen vs. the Queen of Mean by Sigmund Brouwer

Maybe Later by Ingrid Lee

Mystery of the Missing Luck by Jacqueline Pearce

Reviews

“Although there are many labels that could be placed on this short chapter book’s protagonist, none of them matter to the plucky little heroine who loves to read...the subjects of race and learning disabilities are incorporated neatly...Lark is a mixed-race girl debuting a lighthearted series...she may develop into a character with a fan base, like Ramona and Clementine before her.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“From the opening introduction of Lark Ba, aspiring detective, young readers embark on a humorous, entertaining adventure...After reading this first book in the Lark Ba detective series, young readers will look forward to the sequel.” —*CM Magazine*