The teams are getting ready. The Oxford – Cambridge Boat Race is only weeks away and Sam’s brother is on the team. But what’s happening at the boat house? Why are some people from the team ill? Was the fire at the boat house an accident? Sam and his friends don’t think so, and they need to find out.

In this reader you will find:
- Information about Oxford and Cambridge
- The story of the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race
- Glossary of difficult words
- Extension Activities

Tags
Mystery    Fair Play
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Janet Borsbey & Ruth Swan

The Boat Race Mystery

Illustrated by Thomas Campi
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all the team at Eli and E. Chuther.
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The Boat Race Mystery
by Janet Borsbey and Ruth Swan
Illustrated by Thomas Campi

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These icons indicate the parts of the story that are recorded

[start] [stop]
Before you read

Vocabulary

1 Sports. You will find these words in this story. Match them to their definitions.

- to train (v) /train/  
- to row (v) /row/  
- to throw (v) /throw/  
- to win (v) /win/  
- to jump (v) /jump/  
- a crew (n) /crew/  
- a boathouse (n) /boathouse/  
- a squad (n) /squad/  
- a race (n) /race/  

a) you do this to a ball when you want someone to catch it  

b) become the best in a game or sport  

c) use a piece of wood to make a boat go fast  

d) you do this on a trampoline; a kangaroo does this  

e) work very hard to prepare for a sport  

f) a way to find the best person or team in sport  

g) a large number of people who are working to be in a team  

h) the people who are in a water sports team  

i) boats are here when no-one is using them

2 Find the words in the word snake. Put them into the right column.

<table>
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3 Put the adjectives into the right sentences. Use your dictionary to help you.

afraid • angry • lucky • proud • sure • ill

1 Teachers sometimes shout when they are ....................... .
2 Some people are ............................. of flying.
3 In some countries it’s .............................. to see a black cat. In others it isn’t.
4 When you have a cold, you feel ............................. .
5 ‘I can’t find my pen! I’m .............................. I put it on the table.’
6 You feel .............................. when you do something well.

Reading & Vocabulary

4 Read this information about rowing in Oxford. Use your English-English dictionary to help you, then write the translation in your language of the words in red.

This book is about three young people who live in Oxford, an old university city in England. Oxford is famous for its beautiful university colleges and is on the River Thames. There are two exciting college boat races in Oxford every year: Torpids and Eights. The boats start at the same time, about 28 m apart. Each boat has to catch the boat in front of it. The river isn’t straight and sometimes the boats have to turn to go around a corner. People stand on the paths by the river and on the bridges over the river to watch their college boats.

1 a college ..............................
2 in front of ..............................
3 to turn ..............................
4 a corner ..............................
5 around ..............................
6 a path ..............................
7 a bridge ..............................
‘I didn’t do it! I didn’t do it, coach!’

‘I’m sorry, Shorty,’ said the coach in a quiet voice*, ‘but I can’t help you. I don’t want you in the squad any more.’

The coach opened the door and left the Oxford boathouse. Shorty, the tallest person in the squad, looked at the other rowers. No-one said anything.

‘I didn’t do anything,’ said Shorty. He looked at his best friend, ‘Pete?’

Pete didn’t look up.

‘You heard the coach, Shorty, now go,’ someone said.

‘You’re not the coach, Max,’ said one of the Australians. ‘Come with me, Shorty, come outside.’

The two young men left the room. Someone laughed*; Max, Shorty was sure.

Back inside the boathouse, three of the rowers were angry. ‘Why didn’t you say anything, Pete?’ asked one of the Canadians. ‘He’s your best friend! Why didn’t you go with him?’

Pete didn’t answer; he looked at his feet.

---

**a voice** you use your voice when you speak. Your voice makes the noise

**to laugh** when you think something is funny, you often laugh. You make a noise because you are happy
Max, of course, had a lot to say. ‘Pete’s afraid! He wants to stay in the squad. Coach is right; Shorty’s the problem. We can’t row with someone like* him.’

It was a long bike ride from the river to Shorty’s parents’ house past all the colleges. Shorty didn’t know what to do. He didn’t know how to tell his parents. They were very proud of him. They were proud of him because he was a student at the famous university; and they were proud of him because he had a place in the Oxford rowing squad. He rode slowly, thinking about his parents and then he remembered Sam. Sam! Shorty went around the corner into his street and there he was, his brother Sam, in the garden, playing baseball with that funny girl.

‘Shorty!’ shouted* Sam. ‘How was training? How’s my famous brother?’

‘Shut up,’ said Shorty, getting off* his bike. ‘Are Mum and Dad home?’

‘Dad’s in the garden, Mum’s at work.’

Shorty walked past his brother and into the house. Sam and Lisa looked at each other.

‘What’s wrong with him?’ said Lisa. ‘Is he too important to speak to his little brother?’

**like** sometimes ‘like’ is a preposition. It means ‘the same as’ or ‘in the same way’

**to get off** when you get off your bike, you stop riding it. You walk or run

**to shout** when someone can’t hear you, you make a lot of noise when you speak
‘Shut up!’ shouted Sam, and he ran into the house.

From the kitchen window, Sam could see his brother and his father, but he couldn’t hear them. He decided not to go outside. He watched for a long time. Then, he heard the door open and his mother walked into the kitchen. ‘Hello, Sam,’ she said. ‘Good day at school? Where’s your father?’

‘In the garden. He’s talking to Shorty.’

‘Your brother’s home early,’ said Sam’s mum.

‘I know and he isn’t very happy.’

‘What’s wrong, Sameer?’ Sam’s mum was afraid.

Then, Shorty looked up. He saw his mum and brother at the kitchen window.

‘Shorty’s crying* like a baby!’ said Sam. ‘Why’s he crying?’

A short time later, they understood why.

‘Someone took some money from the boathouse,’ said Shorty. ‘Everyone thinks it was me. The money was in my bag, but I didn’t take it; someone put it there. It wasn’t me.’

‘But why did someone do that?’ asked his father.

‘I don’t know. But, I’m not in the squad any more and everyone thinks I took the money.’

‘Of course you didn’t!’ said Sam. ‘There’s an answer to this. We’ll find it, I know.’

\*to cry: people cry when they are sad and babies cry when they are hungry
Sam couldn’t sleep that night. ‘What’s the problem at the boathouse? Why did someone put the money in Shorty’s bag?’ he thought. ‘Why does everyone think it was my brother? Shorty doesn’t cry.’

At about four o’clock in the morning, he turned on the light. ‘I need to make a plan,’ he thought. ‘It’s Saturday tomorrow. I need to talk to Lisa. We need to know who took the money and who put it in Shorty’s bag.’

The next morning, Sam had breakfast very early. He put on his jacket and got his baseball things. ‘We’ve got a game, see you later,’ he said to his father as he ran outside.

It was half-past eight when Sam arrived at Lisa’s house. It was very quiet. He decided to send a message.

Meet me outside now with your baseball things.

Five minutes later, Lisa came outside.

‘I’m sorry that I shouted at you, yesterday,’ said Sam in a quiet voice.

‘That’s OK. What’s wrong?’ she asked. ‘Is it Shorty?’

Sam told Lisa everything.

‘We must start at the boathouse,’ she said. ‘The answer is at the boathouse.’
'LISA JANE HARTLEY! Come back here!' They heard from Lisa’s house. ‘Take Jason with you this morning.’

‘MUM! I’m playing baseball this morning. He’s too young!’ Then she said to Sam, ‘Aren’t we lucky? We’re fourteen and he’s eleven!’

‘Don’t worry, your brother’s OK,’ said Sam. ‘Perhaps* he can help.’

Jason ran outside. ‘Where are we going?’ he asked. He was very happy.

‘To the river,’ said Sam.

‘Boring,’ said Jason.

Down at the river, it was very quiet. It was warm for late October. The three friends decided to sit on a wall by the boathouse and make a plan.

‘We need to know about the money. We need to talk to everyone,’ said Lisa.

‘Shh. They’re coming,’ said Sam.

A group of rowers arrived at the boathouse by bike. ‘Today’s the day!’ said one of them, getting off his bike. ‘Don’t!’ said one of the others.

‘What does he mean?’ asked Lisa.

‘The coach is going to decide the crew for the
boat race today. Well, the final* eight and two others. Everyone else goes into the second boat.’

‘Mmm,’ said Lisa. ‘That’s a motive.’

‘What does motive mean?’ asked Jason.

‘It’s why you do something. The police always look for a motive. Shh.’

Some more rowers came around the corner, got off their bikes and left them outside the boathouse. They went inside. Then, more rowers arrived with the coach, but no-one looked at the three friends on the wall.

Sam, Lisa and Jason waited outside. Jason was bored, and he got off the wall and he started to play with the ball. He threw it to Sam, who threw it back to him.

An old man in work clothes came outside from a small door in the boathouse. ‘Hello, Sam,’ he said.

‘Hello, Mr Pullen,’ said Sam, throwing the ball again.

‘I’m sorry about Shorty,’ said Mr Pullen. ‘He didn’t take that money, I’m sure. And he’s a very good rower.’

‘Pullen!’ Someone shouted from the boathouse. ‘Come and help me with this seat*!’

‘Coming Max,’ said Mr Pullen and he walked into the boathouse.
After-reading Activities

Stop & Check

1 Characters. Complete the sentences with the name and the possessive ’s.

1 Lisa is .................................. daughter.
2 Lisa is ........................................ friend.
3 Jason is ................................... brother.
4 Jason is ........................................ son.
5 Shorty is ................................. brother.
6 Pete is ........................................ best friend.

Writing

2a Lisa didn’t want her mum to understand her message to Sam. Use the key below. Can you read her message?

EQF NGX EGDT ZG ZIT KOCTK ZGDGKKGV? WKOFU NGXK WQLTWQSS ZIOFUL.

CAN ___ _____ ____ __ ___ ________? ______

----- _______ ------.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q=A</th>
<th>W=B</th>
<th>E=C</th>
<th>R=D</th>
<th>T=E</th>
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<td>J=Q</td>
<td>K=R</td>
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<td>C=V</td>
<td>V=W</td>
<td>B=X</td>
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<tr>
<td>N=Y</td>
<td>M=Z</td>
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</table>

2b Can you see how the code works? The message below will help.

SGGA QZ ZIT STZZTKL GF Q ATNWGQKR.

----- ___ ___ ________ _______ _______.

2c Work in pairs. Use the key. Write your own message for your partner.
Vocabulary

3 When there is too much rain, people can’t row. Look at the Oxford rain chart. Write the months in the sentences.

1 There was 20 mm more rain in September than in August.
2......................... and ......................... were the driest months.
3 ......................... was the wettest month.
4 There was 20 mm less rain in ......................... than in December.
5 In ......................... and ......................... there was 10 mm less rain than in November.
6 There was the same amount of rain in January and ..........................

Before-reading Activity

Speaking

4 Work in pairs. Look at the picture on page 27 and answer the questions.

1 What time of day is it?
2 Who can you see in the picture?
3 What are they wearing?
4 Where is the fire?
5 What do you think? Who started the fire?
Focus on...

The Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race

Sport is very important at Oxford and Cambridge. When the two universities play against each other in a sport, people in the team usually get a Blue – this says that they are top sports people. Rowing, cricket and rugby are the most famous Oxford-Cambridge matches.

History
The first Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race was in 1829 and Oxford won. In 1856, the universities started to have the race every year on the River Thames in London. The first women’s Boat Race was in 1927, but they didn’t have the race every year till the 1960s.

The Course
The Boat Race is on the River Thames in London and it goes from Putney Bridge to Mortlake, which is 4.2 miles or about 6.8 kilometres. The fastest race was in 1998, when Cambridge won in 16 minutes and 9 seconds.
Stage 1
Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*
Maureen Simpson, *In Search of a Missing Friend*
Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*
Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*
Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*
J. Borsbey & R. Swan, *The Boat Race Mystery*

Stage 2
Maria Luisa Banfi, *A Faraway World*
Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*
Mary Flagan, *The Egyptian Souvenir*
Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island*
Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
Edited by Liz Ferretti, *Dear Diary...*
Angela Tomkinson, *Loving London*

Stage 3
Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*
Anonymous, *Robin Hood*
Mary Flagan, *Val’s Diary*
Maureen Simpson, *Destination Karminia*
Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*
Anna Claudia Ramos, *Expedition Brazil*
The teams are getting ready. The Oxford – Cambridge Boat Race is only weeks away and Sam’s brother is on the team. But what’s happening at the boat house? Why are some people from the team ill? Was the fire at the boat house an accident? Sam and his friends don’t think so, and they need to find out.

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