

Name:

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# Detective Challenge: The Case of the Cracked Laptop

**Instructions:** Detective, you've been called in to investigate a puzzling case. Read the report carefully. Pay attention to all the details—even the ones that seem unimportant. Your goal is to **find clues, eliminate red herrings, and use textual evidence** to support your theory.

## Case File Report #214: Weekend Mystery in Room 108



Mr. Chan, advisor of the school newspaper, returned to Room 108 Monday morning to find his laptop damaged. A crack ran across the screen, and the lid appeared slightly bent. He had last seen it at 3:45 p.m. on Friday, closed and charging on the newspaper table.

The janitor reported seeing three students enter the room between Friday afternoon and Sunday evening: Leila, Noah, and Maya.

- Leila came in Saturday morning around 10:30 a.m. to work on the front-page layout. She said the laptop was already closed and untouched when she arrived, and she used her own tablet the entire time.
- Noah said he stopped by Saturday afternoon to return the club's digital camera. He placed it "gently" on the table next to the laptop. The janitor remembers hearing a loud thump while Noah was inside, but Noah claims it was just a chair falling over.
- Maya entered Sunday evening to grab a forgotten notebook. She said she was in a rush and didn't look around much, but did notice a dangling camera. Mr. Chan found a smudge of bright orange ink on the laptop and a broken pencil nearby. Maya often uses bright orange pens, but she insists she wasn't carrying one that day.

There's one more odd detail: the camera Noah returned was found dangling by its strap from the edge of the table, as if it had almost fallen but got caught. Mr. Chan is unsure when the damage happened—but suspects it occurred sometime after Friday afternoon.

## Detective Case Questions: Use Textual Evidence to Build Your Theory

### 1. When was the laptop last seen in good condition?

Use a quote to support your answer.

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### 2. Who entered Room 108 between Friday and Sunday?

List the names and give a reason each person was in the room.

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### 3. What suspicious sound did the janitor hear while Noah was in the room?

Provide the quote and explain why it matters.

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### 4. What piece of evidence might connect Maya to the scene of the damage?

Include two details from the report.

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### 5. What strange detail was noticed about the camera Noah returned?

Quote the part that describes the camera.

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### 6. Based on the evidence, who do you think caused the damage—and why?

Write 2-3 sentences with at least two pieces of textual evidence.

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## **Answers:**

1) When was the laptop last seen in good condition?

Answer:

“He had last seen it at 3:45 p.m. on Friday, closed and charging on the newspaper table.”  
This shows the laptop was still undamaged at that time.

2. Who entered Room 108 between Friday and Sunday?

Answer:

Leila – to work on the front-page layout  
Noah – to return the club’s digital camera  
Maya – to grab a forgotten notebook

3. What suspicious sound did the janitor hear while Noah was in the room?

Answer:

“The janitor remembers hearing a loud thump while Noah was inside.”  
This could suggest something (like the camera or laptop) fell or was bumped.

4. What piece of evidence might connect Maya to the scene of the damage?

Answer:

“Mr. Chan found a smudge of bright orange ink on the laptop.”  
“Maya often uses bright orange pens, but she insists she wasn’t carrying one that day.”  
These clues suggest Maya may have come into contact with the laptop.

5. What strange detail was noticed about the camera Noah returned?

Answer:

“The camera Noah returned was found dangling by its strap from the edge of the table, as if it had almost fallen but got caught.”  
This could mean the camera hit or damaged the laptop as it fell.

6. Based on the evidence, who do you think caused the damage—and why?

Sample Answer:

I think Noah likely caused the damage. The janitor heard a “loud thump” while Noah was alone in the room, and later, the camera he returned was found dangling near the laptop. It’s possible the falling camera hit the laptop and cracked the screen. While Maya’s orange ink is suspicious, the damage likely happened before she arrived.