

Name:

Date:

Section:

Score:

Detective Challenge: The Case of the Vanished Victory

Instructions

Detective, a prized possession has gone missing, and you're on the case. Read the incident report below with a critical eye. Look for clues, note inconsistencies, and identify **red herrings**. Use logic and textual evidence to determine who likely took the trophy—or if something else is going on.

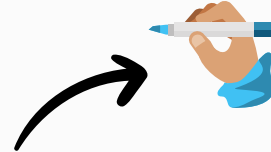
What's a Red Herring?



A **red herring** is a clue that seems important but actually leads you in the wrong direction. It's meant to distract you from the real answer.

In mystery stories, red herrings make you suspect the wrong person or think something happened a certain way—when it didn't. They keep you guessing.

Example:



If someone says, "I saw Maya near the crime scene with a marker in her hand," but it turns out the real clue had nothing to do with markers—that's a **red herring**.



Case File Report #387: The Missing Championship Trophy

Over the weekend, the school's soccer championship trophy disappeared from its display case in the gym lobby. The trophy was last seen Friday afternoon during the pep rally at 2:00 p.m. By Monday morning, it was gone. The case showed no signs of forced entry, but it was unlocked.

Relevant Details:

- Coach Alvarez locked the case himself after the pep rally on Friday, but admits he might've forgotten to double-check the latch.
- The gym was used Saturday morning for a community fitness class and again Sunday evening for cheerleading practice.
- Security cameras were temporarily offline all weekend due to a scheduled system upgrade.

Suspect Statements:

Jordan (Team Captain):



Came in Friday evening to pick up forgotten cleats. Claims he walked past the trophy case but didn't stop. Says he didn't notice anything unusual and left within 5 minutes. Known to be protective of the trophy and once argued that it should stay in the locker room, not on public display.

Ava (Cheer Captain):



Admitted stopping by Sunday night to grab extra pompoms before Monday's game. Says she was in a hurry and didn't even glance at the case. When asked if she saw anyone else, she mentioned that "someone" had been in the office behind the gym, but she didn't get a good look.

Tyler (School Tech Volunteer):



Assigned to monitor the security system upgrade. He was in and out of the tech room Saturday afternoon. Says he had no reason to go near the gym, though some classmates say he once joked about how "overrated trophies are." His backpack was seen looking unusually full that day.

Extra Clue:

A small piece of gold plastic was found under a bench near the gym's side door—similar in color to the base of the trophy. Also, the case key, usually kept in Coach Alvarez's desk, was missing but later found in the lost-and-found box Monday morning.

Your Task:

- Determine who most likely took the trophy—or whether it was simply moved or damaged.
- Highlight key evidence and eliminate irrelevant or misleading information.
- Write a brief report (2–3 paragraphs) explaining your theory, supported by specific clues from the text.

Possible Answer:

Conclusion: Tyler is the most likely suspect.

Reasoning:

Several pieces of evidence point toward Tyler. Although he claimed he had no reason to be near the gym, Ava reported seeing someone in the gym office on Sunday, and Tyler was known to be in and out of the tech room all weekend. The tech room is near the gym, making it plausible he entered the area. Additionally, Tyler's backpack was seen looking unusually full on Saturday—potentially large enough to carry the trophy. His dismissive attitude toward trophies ("overrated trophies") may indicate motive, especially if he saw taking it as a harmless prank or protest. The key to the display case, which should have been secure in Coach Alvarez's desk, was missing and mysteriously found in the lost-and-found. As a tech volunteer, Tyler may have had access to areas other students didn't, possibly even the key. The small piece of gold plastic near the gym's side door suggests the trophy was moved, dropped, or partially broken during the theft, further indicating a rushed or careless removal.

Red Herrings & Eliminations:

- Jordan is a red herring. While protective of the trophy and once suggesting it be moved, there's no evidence he went near the case, and no behavior contradicts his statement.
- Ava seems credible. Though she noticed someone near the gym office, she offered this detail unprompted and didn't display any suspicious behavior.
- Coach Alvarez likely forgot to secure the case fully, which allowed easy access—but he is not a suspect in the theft itself.