

# The Cayuga Island Kids Series



Story by  
Judy Bradbury

Illustrations by  
Gabriella Vagnoli



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Cayuga Island  
Kids  
Series**

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A City of Light imprint

© 2023 Text by Judy Bradbury  
© 2023 Illustrations by Gabriella Vagnoli

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A City of Light imprint



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**The  
Cayuga Island  
Kids  
Series**

**Book 1**

**The Mystery of the  
Barking Branches  
and the Sunken Ship**



*For my dear cousin Lynne Scalia,  
who sent me the newspaper article that started it all.*

*J.B.*





LACEY



MAC

Other Cayuga Island Characters



MRS. SCHIEBER



MR. ESPOSITO





JULIAN



MAYA



YOKO



MISS LYNNE



DR. SYLVIA SPINA

# CAYUGA IS

COLLEGE

SULLIVAN  
HOT LOGS

LIBRARY

MY SCHOOL

LITTLE  
FREE  
LIBRARY

Miss LYNNE

JOLIET

GRIFFON

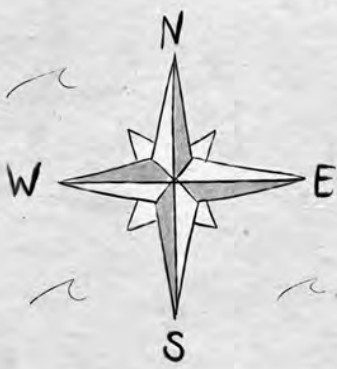
MAYA

HENNEPIN

MY HOUSE

CHAMPLAIN

JULIAN



# ISLAND MAP

by MAC



# Cayuga Island



*Cayuga Island is a tiny island. It is just a few miles upstream from the mighty Niagara Falls, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. A narrow bridge leads on and off the island. It crosses where the churning Niagara River narrows to a gurgling creek.*

*Four streets run the length of the island. Three of them are named for explorers of the Niagara Frontier: Joliet, Hennepin, and Champlain. The fourth street is named after a ship, the Griffon. Gravel alleys wind behind the houses. There are seven.*

*But there are no schools or stores, no stoplights or movie theaters or much of anything else on the island—except fun, adventure, and perhaps a bit of mystery, if you look for it.*

*It's summer now, and that's what the Cayuga Island Kids plan to do. Are you ready to join their adventure?*

Book 1

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Book 1  
Chapter One

# The Cayuga Island Kids

**U**nder the covers, something was tickling Lacey.

She wiggled her toes. She waggled her foot. It was the first day of summer vacation, and Lacey wasn't ready to open her eyes.

*Tickle. Tickle.*

Lacey jiggled and joggled her foot. She scratched her big toe with her other big toe.

The tickle scurried up her leg to her shin. It teased her knee.

Lacey flung back the covers. It was time to solve the first mystery of summer vacation.



Pesky lifted his furry head. His shaggy tail spun in circles.

“Yip!” yapped Pesky.

Lacey patted her pup. “Mystery solved!”



At Mac’s house something was tickling his ear.

Mac shook his head. His hands were busy dumping Pop-Pops from the hero-sized cereal



box into his frontiersman bowl. Ever since he found out about the American Old West, no other bowl would do. Besides, it was good and deep, and Mac was as hungry as a bear in spring.

*Tickle. Tickle.*

Mac's hands were busy pouring milk over the cereal, so he shook his head a little harder.

Milk splished and splashed onto the table.

Mac swiped it with his sleeve. Then he reached up to itch the tickle.

The furry tail on his coonskin cap swished. It wasn't really raccoon fur—Mac wouldn't like that. But it was his dad's hat when he was a boy, and Mac really liked that.

Soon Mac wasn't as hungry as a bear anymore. He picked up his powder horn and slung it over his shoulder. He was ready for his first adventure of summer!



At Julian's house, the *Junior Scientist's Word-of-the-Day* was tickling his brain.

Dogwood. What a funny name for a tree!

Julian wondered. What does a dogwood look like? How did the tree get its name? Do the branches wag like a dog's tail?

Julian tapped on his tablet. He swiped and read. *When the wind blows, the branches of the dogwood sound like a dog barking.*

Julian giggled. Bark barking!

Julian read on. *Long ago dogwood stems were used to make toothbrushes, tennis rackets, and arrows.*

Arrows! Julian giggled again. Wait until Mac hears that!

Julian wondered. Are there dogwood trees on Cayuga Island?

Well, it was summer now, and that meant there was plenty of time to find out.



A breeze tickled Maya's nose. A bee buzzed against the screen on her bedroom window.

Maya stretched and rose. She twirled to the closet and put on her most favorite purple ballet shoes.

The elastic hugged her foot. Satin ribbons brushed her ankles as she wound them around her legs.

Maya danced down the hall, through the kitchen, and out the door.

She sat on the purple seat of her most favorite swing set her dad had built for her.

Maya leaned back and began to fly.

A curl tickled her face as she climbed higher.

Maya rose above her most favorite sandbox with its purple-striped awning. She looked across the yard.

Purple tee shirts, purple shorts, and purple leotards waved from the clothesline.

Sparky the cat lay beside the bushes. Her purple collar sparkled in the sun.

Maya spotted a chickadee in the broad elm tree. It chirped a welcome as another chickadee flew near.

Maya folded her legs and pulled.

Higher and higher she went.

As she swung forward, Maya spied something. It was furry with a stripy tail, and it was bobbing along the sidewalk on the other side of the fence.

*What was that?*



Before Maya could puzzle it out, she was swinging backwards.

When she arced up again, the furry thing with the stripy tail was gone.

*Mysterious*, she thought. And that made her think of Lacey.

“Maya!” a voice called out. “Want to go to the park?”

The chickadees flew off. Sparky scampered across the yard.

Maya turned to find a furry cap with a stripy tail sitting on top of Mac’s head.

Mystery solved!



The bell buzzed and Yoko answered the door.

Maya twirled. “Come with us to the park.”

“It’s summer!” Mac’s cap bobbed.  
“Adventures await!”

Yoko’s eyes sparkled. What could be better than two friends at your door?

“It’s sunny and bright,  
Not a cloud in sight.  
I’m ready to play  
the summer away.”

The rhyme tickled Yoko’s brain. Making rhymes always did that.

Maybe it was because even her name rhymed. Yoko liked to say it was the shortest poem ever.

She reached for her sunglasses and clicked the door shut.

What could be better than two friends at your door?

Yoko grinned. Two friends at your door on a summer day, that’s what.

Yoko loved to rhyme. She loved summer. And she loved being with her friends.

Book 1  
Chapter Two

# Mystery or Hunt?

**I**n the park Julian was looking up at a tree.  
“What’s up?” Mac asked.  
Yoko giggled.

Maya balanced on her toes. She circled her arms around her head and looked up.

“Does this tree look like this one?” Julian pointed from the tree in front of them to the tree in the photo on his tablet.

Yoko rhymed an answer.

“These trees are not alike.

These leaves curve, those spike.”

“This is a dogwood.” Julian tapped the tablet. “Its branches make a barking sound when they rub together.”

“Really?” Maya looked down at the tablet and lost her balance.

Julian rubbed one of the tree’s branches against another. No barking.

He read more from the tablet. “Its branches have been used to make toothbrushes, tennis rackets, and arrows.”

“Arrows!” Suddenly, Mac was very interested.

Maya studied the photos. “Its blossoms are pretty.” She wondered if they smelled good.

With a yip and a yap, Pesky joined the group. Lacey was close behind.

“Show Lacey the photo of the tree,  
She can help solve this mystery.”

Yoko loved that *tree* and *mystery* rhymed.

Lacey’s eyes widened. “Mystery?”

“We want to find a dogwood tree,” explained Julian.



“So we can make arrows for our adventures!”  
The tail on Mac’s cap swished.

“And braid the blossoms into a tiara,” added  
Maya.

“And listen to it bark,” said Julian.



Lacey wasn't sure what Julian meant by that. But she was stuck on something else. "This seems more like a hunt than a mystery," she said.

"A hunt is an adventure!" Mac was really excited now.

"The mystery is if there are any dogwood trees on Cayuga Island. The adventure is hunting for one." Julian wanted to keep both Lacey and Mac interested.

"Yip," said Pesky. He ran in circles chasing his tail.

Lacey laughed. "I guess Pesky wants to hunt for a *dogwood* tree, too."

"Adventure awaits!" cried Mac. He felt like an explorer on the frontier.

Book 1  
Chapter Three

# Clues

“**W**ait,” said Lacey. She pulled a notebook from her back pocket and a pencil from behind her ear. “We need clues.”

Lacey kept notes on the clues she found and the mysteries she hoped to solve in a notebook. She flipped to a blank page. She wrote *Dogwood Trees* at the top. “Ready,” she said.

“The dogwood has pretty flowers.” Maya pointed to the picture on the tablet.

Julian read the caption. “The dogwood has white, pink, or red leaves called bracts with yellow flowers in the center.”

Lacey took notes.

Julian pointed to the screen on his tablet. “It also says, ‘Dogwoods bloom in the spring.’” He frowned. “It’s summer now, so the blooms will be gone.”

Lacey crossed out the clue she had just written down.

Maya was disappointed. “Then what will we make tiaras from?”

Yoko had an idea.

“We’ll gather and weave the leaves instead,  
Then glue on a jewel or two.

Add sparkle and shine to the top of  
your head

And gems to the toes of each shoe!”

Maya twirled in one direction and then the other. She liked sparkle as much as she liked flowers.

Lacey frowned at her notes. “We need a few more clues to help us find a dogwood tree.”

Julian read on.



Yoko listened for words she could rhyme.

Maya practiced holding her head high.  
That was important so her tiara—once she had  
one—wouldn't slip off.

Pesky wagged his tail.

Lacey took notes.

Mac reached into his powder horn and  
pulled out a stash of candies. All this reading and  
searching for clues was making him hungry.

## Dogwood Trees

- lots of white, pink, or red leaves (called bracts) with yellow flowers in the center in spring
- light green leaves in summer
- deep red leaves in fall
- in winter bark looks like alligator skin
- grows 20-30 feet tall
- likes some sun, but not too much
- branches are thin and hard
- when branches rub together, it sounds like a dog barking

Soon Lacey had a list in her notebook. She would cross out anything the kids decided weren't good clues. The first fact was already crossed out.

"Don't forget that the branches were used to make arrows," Mac reminded his friends.

But Lacey didn't write that down. "Interesting fact, but not a clue," she said.

Julian read on. "In the 1600s, Native Americans knew winter was over and it was time to plant corn when dogwoods bloomed." He scrolled down the page. "They thought dogwoods were lucky." He paused. "The bark and roots from the dogwood tree were used for medicines and dyes. The sap is poisonous."

"We should remember that last fact," said Mac.

It wasn't a clue, but Mac was right. It was important to remember. Lacey added it to the list.

Finally, they were done. Lacey's notes looked like this:

## Dogwood Trees

- lots of white, pink, or red leaves (called bracts) with yellow flowers in the center in spring
- light green leaves in summer
- deep red leaves in fall
- bark looks like alligator skin in winter
- grows 20-30 feet tall
- likes some sun, but not too much
- branches are thin and hard
- when branches rub together, it sounds like a dog barking
- the sap is poisonous



Lacey put the notebook in her back pocket. “Our suspects are trees,” she announced. “We are detectives!”

“Time to investigate!” Mac rubbed his hands together.

“Where do we start?” Maya looked around the park. “There are trees all over Cayuga Island.” She wondered if she would have a tiara by tomorrow.

“You are right,” agreed Julian.

“We could ask an expert,” Lacey said.

“Mrs. Schieber!” Mac shouted.

Yoko nodded. Mrs. Schieber knew something about everything. She was the school librarian, after all.

Maya pointed her toes and leapt her way out of the park. Mrs. Schieber was her favorite adult at their school.

Pesky tugged on his leash as if he wanted to leap after Maya. Lacey tucked the pencil behind her ear and followed her friends.

Book 1  
Chapter Four

# Expert

**M**rs. Schieber lived on Hennepin Avenue, a few blocks down from Mac. The street was named after an explorer. Mrs. Schieber liked that because she was curious about history. She had read many books about Father Hennepin and all the explorers of the Niagara Frontier.

Besides history and reading, Mrs. Schieber liked gardening. And now that it was summer, the kids knew they would find Mrs. Schieber in her yard beneath a large straw hat.

She was kneeling, pulling weeds. "Hello, my friends!" She smiled widely. "Are you enjoying

the first day of summer vacation?”

“Adventures await!” said Mac.

“Sounds exciting,” said Mrs. Schieber. She snipped a cluster of dandelions and turned to Yoko. “I pluck the weeds so they don’t spread their...”

“Seeds!” Yoko finished the sentence.

Mrs. Schieber nodded. “But it’s also a pleasure to turn trash into...”

“Treasure!” Yoko felt lucky to have Mrs. Schieber as a neighbor as well as the librarian at Cayuga Drive School.

Mrs. Schieber laughed and handed the yellow flowers to Maya. Mrs. Schieber knew Yoko liked to rhyme, and she knew Maya liked flowers. “Just because we call these weeds doesn’t mean they’re not pretty,” she said.

Maya agreed. “I make necklaces from dandelions. I wonder, would they make a good tiara?”

“Anyway,” said Julian, hoping to keep his friends on track, “we need the help of an expert.”



“That’s why we thought of you,” said Maya, rubbing her chin against the dandelions.

“We have a mystery to solve,” Lacey explained.

Pesky wagged his tail and panted. He had just run two blocks from the park to Mrs. Schieber’s garden, after all.

Mrs. Schieber filled a pail with cold water. She put it down in front of Pesky.

“Tell me about this mystery,” she said.

“It’s a mystery and a hunt and an adventure,” said Mac.

“I see,” said Mrs. Schieber.

“We are hunting for a dogwood tree,” said Julian.

“The mystery is whether there is a dogwood tree on Cayuga Island,” Lacey explained.

“I did some research,” said Julian.

Mac nodded. The tail on his cap bobbed. “Julian found a ton of facts about dogwoods.”

“All mysteries need facts to help get them solved,” said Mrs. Schieber.

“I remembered to check more than one source,” said Julian, “just like you taught us.”

Mrs. Schieber gave Julian a thumbs-up.

“Now we need to detect and inspect a suspect or two,” Yoko said. So far, summer was turning out to be a ton of rhyming fun.

“Hunting for suspects can be exciting,” Mrs. Schieber said, “especially when you are looking for something that can hide in plain sight.”

“Hide in plain sight?” Maya repeated.

Lacey liked the sound of that. Very mysterious. She reached for her notebook.

“When you are hunting for suspects,” Mrs. Schieber explained, “you must pay attention to everything. Be observant. Notice every detail. You never know where you will find a clue.”



Mrs. Schieber sat in the dirt beside a row of tomato plants. “For instance, did you notice that butterfly?” Mrs. Schieber pointed to a clump of marigolds. A butterfly fluttered its wings and soon flew to another part of the garden. “Or this ladybug?” She fingered a leaf on the tomato plant next to her.

“They would be good suspects if we were looking for garden helpers,” Julian joked.

Mrs. Schieber laughed. “That’s correct, Julian. Butterflies spread pollen with their wings. A ladybug can eat up to 50 aphids a day. Both garden helpers keep my plants healthy.”

Mac leaned in to get a better look at the ladybug. “It makes sense to look for a garden helper in a garden. I wish we knew where to look for a dogwood.”

“Start with what you know,” said Mrs. Schieber. “And think about what you need to find out.”

Book 1  
Chapter Five

# Details

**T**he friends gathered around Lacey's list of clues.

"We know dogwood leaves are light green in summer," said Yoko.

"We don't know the shape of the leaves," said Julian.

"Or their size," said Mac.

Julian typed on his tablet. *What is the size and shape of the dogwood tree leaf?*

A photo and answer popped up in seconds. The kids leaned in. Julian read. "The dogwood tree leaf is 3 to 5 inches long. It is oval in shape



with a wavy edge, green above and somewhat paler below.”

Lacey wrote the information in her notebook right after the fact that dogwoods grow 20-30 feet tall.

“How tall is 20-30 feet?” Maya wondered.

“I’m four feet tall,” said Mac. “I had to stand by a ruler before I was allowed to ride the roller coaster at Fantastic Island.”

The kids looked at each other. They measured themselves against Mac. Yoko was a little taller. Lacey was a little shorter. But they were all just about the same height.

“I’m taller if I stand on my tiptoes,” said Maya. “I’m even taller if I hold my head high.” She showed her friends. They all stood on their tiptoes. They held their heads high. Still, Yoko was a little taller and Lacey was a little shorter than the others.

The kids looked around Mrs. Schieber’s yard. There were lots of bushes. Some were

shorter than the kids. Some were taller. A bush along the fence was the tallest.

“This bush is more than four feet tall,” said Mac.

“I’m six feet tall,” said Mrs. Schieber. She stood next to the bush. It was a little shorter than she was. Nothing in the garden was taller than Mrs. Schieber.

Julian thought out loud. “Mrs. Schieber is six feet tall. Five Mrs. Schiebers stacked one on top of the other would be thirty feet—or as tall as a dogwood tree grows.”

Mac giggled. “There’s only one Mrs. Schieber.”

“If we stacked ourselves one on top of the other, how tall would that be?” Maya asked.

“We’re all about four feet tall,” said Yoko. “So that would be twenty feet!” Yoko was as good at math as she was at rhyming.

“Let’s get a visual,” suggested Mrs. Schieber.

She told Mac to lie down in the grass. Mrs. Schieber placed a garden trowel beneath his feet.

Lacey lay down next, with her feet just above Mac's cap. Then came Yoko.

“Don't point your toes, no ballet pose,” she reminded Maya, who was next.

Julian followed. Mrs. Schieber placed a twig above his head.



Pesky raced for the twig, but Mrs. Schieber was quicker. She placed her foot firmly on top of it.

“Everyone up!” Mrs. Schieber clapped her hands.

The kids looked from the garden trowel to the twig.

“Twenty feet is tall,” observed Julian.

Pesky yipped and ran around the twig under Mrs. Schieber’s foot.

“How long is this?” Lacey asked, pointing to the hose.

“Why, I believe it’s thirty feet!” Mrs. Schieber exclaimed.

The kids stretched the hose out next to where they had lain. A full-grown dogwood could be 20-30 feet tall, and now they knew what that looked like.

All of this research was making Mac hungry. He plucked a tiny tomato from one of Mrs. Schieber’s patio plants. It was warm and as sweet as candy.

Book 1  
Chapter Six

# The Hunt Begins

“**L**et’s begin our search in the park,” suggested Lacey.

The park was narrow and ran alongside a shallow creek off the Niagara River. There were flowers and bushes and grass. And there were plenty of trees.

“Good idea,” said Julian. “We can each search a section.”

“Buddy up and stay within sight of one another,” Mrs. Schieber reminded the kids.

Mac picked up his powder horn and slung it over his shoulder. “Ready,” he said.

“Not quite,” said Mrs. Schieber. She plucked a handful of the bite-sized tomatoes from the plants on the patio. She dropped them into Mac’s powder horn. “Sustenance for the hunt.” She winked at Mac.

Mac didn’t know the word *sustenance*, but he could figure out what it meant. He wouldn’t go hungry as he hunted for a dogwood tree in the park.

Maya carefully tucked the dandelions into the toes of her most favorite purple ballet shoes. They weren’t gems, but they sure were pretty. She hoped the flowers would last until they found a dogwood tree.

Julian took one last look at the length of hose. He studied the space between the garden trowel and the twig. He checked the photo of the dogwood tree leaf on his tablet. Finally, he was ready.

Yoko pushed up her sunglasses and fist-bumped Mrs. Schieber.

“We’d like to stay, but we can’t delay.

We have a mystery to solve today.”

Mrs. Schieber waved goodbye as the friends headed back to the park.

Trees were all around, just as they had been before they visited Mrs. Schieber. But now the Cayuga Island Kids had a plan.

They had gathered facts.

They knew important details.

They would buddy up.

They would look for clues hiding in plain sight.

The hunt was on!

They would find a dogwood in no time.

Or so they thought.



Book 1  
Chapter Seven

# Buddies

**M**aya and Yoko linked arms. They would be buddies. Maya stopped at a patch of wildflowers as soon as they entered the park. Yoko waited. She was Maya's buddy, after all. And buddies stick together.

Pesky stopped, too. He liked sniffing things, and the park was the perfect place for that. When Lacey tried to move him along, he dug in his heels.

"He can buddy up with us," Yoko said, and Lacey handed her the leash.

Lacey followed Julian. He was the perfect buddy. Julian had gathered the facts. Lacey had written them down. They could check facts



in Lacey's notebook or on Julian's tablet. They would solve this mystery.

Mac followed Julian, too. He was the perfect buddy. Julian was Mac's best friend, after all. Besides that, Julian was very good at research. He could investigate how to make arrows—once they found a dogwood tree.

Three people could buddy up.

Julian spotted a tree that seemed to be the right height. He pointed. "Maybe that one?"

Lacey looked up. Mac looked up, too.



Julian and Lacey studied the leaves. Were they the right shape?

Mac studied the branches. “These are too thick to be dogwoods. They wouldn’t make good arrows,” he said.

Julian and Lacey looked at the branches.

“You’re right,” said Lacey.

Julian agreed.

They kept walking. Julian followed Mac. Lacey followed Mac, too. They made a good team of three.

Back at the flowers, Maya bent down to sniff a purple bloom. Would it be okay to pick this most favorite flower to put behind her ear?

Yoko didn’t think so.

“If every person picked a bloom

public gardens would be doomed.

Enjoy them with your nose and eyes

leave picking and plucking to the gardening guys.”

And gardening girls, thought Maya. But she knew why Yoko didn't say that. *Guys* rhymes with *eyes*. *Girls* doesn't.

Maya noticed Pesky pawing at something. She leaned over and looked closer.

On the edge of the patch of wildflowers was a round, hard bump.

What was that?

It was covered in dirt, but it didn't look like part of a plant.

Was it a rock?

Was it a nest?

Or was something buried there?

Book 1

Chapter Eight

# A Bump in the Park

**M**aya leaned in even closer. Pesky wagged. Maya helped Pesky brush away more of the dirt.

Maya pulled on Yoko's arm. "This is not a rock or part of a plant. Something is buried here."

Together the girls scraped at the dirt. Pesky, too. They made a good team of three.

Soon they could see more of the hard, round bump. It looked like it was about the size

of a softball. But it felt cold, like metal.

Yoko pushed up her sunglasses.

“We need something to dig out this ball,  
It’s stuck in there and it isn’t small.”

She snapped her fingers.

“I know what we can do!

Borrow a trowel from you-know-who!”

“Great idea,” Maya said. “Pesky and I will  
stay here to mark the spot.”

Yoko ran all the way to Mrs. Schieber’s  
house.



Meanwhile, Mac, Julian, and Lacey walked slowly through the park. They looked left and right. They looked up. They eyed each tree. Would they find a dogwood hiding in plain sight?

Some trees were too tall. Other trees had blossoms or pine cones. Many trees were the wrong shape. None of the leaves matched the photos on Julian's tablet.

The three friends looked and looked. When they reached the far end of the park, Lacey pulled out her notebook. She studied the list of facts. She wanted to be sure they hadn't missed a clue.

Julian looked over her shoulder.

Mac sighed. He reached into his powder horn and pulled out a tiny tomato. It was round and plump and warm. He popped it into his mouth and tasted its goodness. He reached into his horn for another.

Lacey held out her hand. Mac gave her the tomato. He tossed another one to Julian.



The kids enjoyed the tomatoes and then turned around. They had walked to the end of the park. It was time to head back.

Lacey led the way. Julian followed. He was still studying the trees. Maybe he would see something he missed. Then came Mac. He was fishing in his powder horn, hoping for another tomato.

Book 1

Chapter Nine

# Buried Treasure

**U**p ahead the girls were waving. Maya was jumping up and down. Or was she dancing?

Pesky yipped. He seemed to be dancing, too. Or was he just jumping up and down?

“Is that a garden shovel in Yoko’s hand?” Lacey wondered out loud. She hurried ahead.

Julian followed. Mac was close behind.

Yoko and Maya showed their friends what they had uncovered.

“We think it’s a metal ball,” said Maya.





First Julian, then Mac, then Lacey took a turn digging with the small garden shovel. They were careful. They didn't want to damage the ball. Slowly they wiped away more and more of the dirt.

Julian felt around the ball. "It's solid, and it seems heavy," he said.

"I wonder where it came from," said Maya.

"I wonder how long it's been here," added Yoko.

"It looks old," said Mac.

Lacey's eyes sparkled. "We *uncovered* another mystery..." She eyed her friends to see if they got the joke she had made. "I'll add it to our first mystery." She flipped to a new page in her notebook. "This is the best day ever!"

"A mystery ball..." Maya giggled. "That sounds like a fairy tale."

Mac had a different thought. "Could it be part of a wagon wheel from the frontier days?"

“Or a meteorite?” wondered Yoko.

Julian’s forehead wrinkled. That usually meant he was thinking. “This ball is heavy, it’s metal, and it looks old. Wait!” Julian snapped his fingers.

“Julian is getting another idea,” said Mac.

Julian clicked on his tablet. He swiped and tapped.

A photo popped up and Julian zoomed in.

“This could be a cannonball!” Julian cried.

Maya’s eyes grew wide.

Yoko gasped.

Meanwhile, Pesky raced in circles around the ball.

“A cannonball!” Mac looked from Maya to Yoko to Pesky. “You make a terrific team!”

Yoko grinned. In her head, she was already thinking of words that rhyme with cannonball.

*Outlet mall, concert hall, ten feet tall...*

Book 1  
Chapter Ten

# Digging and Digging

**J**ulian was excited. “Let’s get this out of the ground.”

The kids worked together to try to free the metal ball.

Yoko began digging first. Maya and Julian knelt beside her and pushed aside the dirt. Lacey dug next. Then Mac. Pesky wagged and yipped at the growing mound.

The kids pushed and pulled the ball. They huffed and puffed in the hot sun. The ball was solid and heavy. It did not move much.

Mac pushed back his coonskin cap.

Yoko wiped her brow.

Maya noticed the flowers on her shoes were wilting.

Suddenly, a shadow moved across the kids. They looked up to find Mr. Esposito peering down at them.

Mr. Esposito was Maya's next-door neighbor. He was also a park volunteer. He kept the park tidy and the flowers blooming.

"What's going on here?" he asked. "Digging in public gardens is not thoughtful of others. And it is not allowed." Mr. Esposito eyed Pesky, but the dog was just sniffing a pile of fresh dirt. It was the kids who had a trowel, and they were dusty from digging.

Mac adjusted his cap. "We're trying to get a cannonball out of the flower bed."

"Mac, you sure do have a powerful imagination. And you're always on the lookout for adventure. But, a cannonball...?" Mr. Esposito cocked his head.

“Well,” Julian explained, “we think it *might* be a cannonball.” Julian liked to stick to the facts.

Mr. Esposito crouched down.

He took a good look at the metal ball.

He adjusted his glasses.

He scratched away more of the dirt.

“Well, I’ll be...” Mr. Esposito sputtered. He was so surprised, he fell onto his behind. His hat fell off and landed in the pile of dirt. Lacey grabbed it just before Pesky got to it.



She brushed it off and handed it to Mr. Esposito.

“We were looking for a dogwood tree, but we found this,” said Maya.

Mr. Esposito pointed at the ball. “This is definitely not a dogwood tree.”

“We are going to make arrows from dogwood branches,” said Mac.

“And tiaras from the leaves,” added Maya.

“Once we find a dogwood tree,” said Mac.

“Anyway, do you think this could be a cannonball?” asked Julian. He liked to stick to the topic.

Mr. Esposito stood and brushed off the seat of his pants. “Let’s see if we can free this ball and have a better look. I’ll get a proper tool for the job.”

He turned and headed for his garden cart. Mac followed. The garden cart used to be a golf cart, but Mr. Esposito liked gardening more than he liked golf. So he carried garden tools where

the golf clubs used to be. Mac thought all the shovels and especially those big scissors were way more interesting than golf clubs.

Mr. Esposito chose a narrow shovel and a small spade. He pulled out his leather work gloves and handed them to Mac to carry. Then he tucked away the clippers. “Trimming the park bushes will have to wait for another day,” he said. “We have a cannonball to tend to.”



Book 1  
Chapter Eleven

# Investigation

**M**r. Esposito wiped his brow with the sleeve of his shirt. He picked up the ball. He held it in both hands and turned it carefully. Even though it was heavy, he treated it as if it were as fragile as a robin's egg.

He passed it to Julian.

“Wow!” Julian whistled. “That’s hefty.”

Mac held it next. He figured that hefty must mean heavy. He tried to whistle, too, but it came out *whoo-who*.

Mr. Esposito took a rag from his back pocket and gently dusted the ball. Bits of metal fell into the dirt.

The kids looked closely at the ball, but there were no markings on it.

Lacey studied the flakes of metal in the dirt. She picked up one of the larger pieces to give it a closer look. She rummaged in her pockets for a tissue and wrapped the flake inside. Carefully, she tucked the folded tissue away. Then she took out her notebook. “Time to investigate,” she said.



Julian opened his tablet. “We can start by searching for photos of cannonballs and see if we find one that looks like this,” he suggested.

Yoko pushed up her sunglasses.

Meanwhile, Maya sat cross-legged on the ground. She patted Pesky. She wondered if he would like a dandelion dog collar. Plenty of the weeds were flowering. She spotted trailing vines with teeny purple flowers. She especially liked those. She was pretty sure plucking weeds from the park would be allowed. Mr. Esposito might even decide she would make an excellent park volunteer.

Maya was about to ask Mr. Esposito if she could pick the weeds when she noticed her backyard neighbor walking toward them.

Miss Lynne waved. A colorful quilted bag hung from her shoulder. Papers and books poked out of the top. A badge on a ribbon hung from the side. Miss Lynne taught at the college across town, and even though it was summer vacation for the Cayuga Island Kids, Miss Lynne had classes to teach.

“Hello, my friends!” Miss Lynne bent to pet Pesky and noticed the cannonball. “What is that?” she asked.

Mr. Esposito rocked back and forth on his heels. “The kids found it right here,” he pointed to the flower bed.

Julian answered Miss Lynne’s question. “We think maybe it’s a cannonball.”

“A cannonball!” she exclaimed.

“Maybe,” Julian repeated.

“We’re investigating.” Lacey pointed to Julian’s tablet.

“We want to figure out if this really could be a cannonball,” Maya said.

“And how it ended up here,” added Yoko.

“There’s plenty of history attached to this island,” said Miss Lynne. “Three of the streets are named after explorers of the Niagara Frontier. Griffon Avenue was named after their ship.”

“That’s my street!” Maya exclaimed.

“We were hunting for a dogwood tree to

make arrows. Then we found this,” said Mac. “Arrows! Cannonballs! Explorers! *The Niagara Frontier!* I didn’t even know we were part of a frontier! This is turning out to be a terrific summer so far.”

Suddenly, Julian held out his tablet. “This cannonball looks like a match.” His brow crumpled. “But how can we be sure?”

Miss Lynne drummed her chin with her fingers. “Researching on the internet is helpful,” she said, “but your public library can be the best place to gather information on local history. Old books and papers stored in special collections are called archives.”

Lacey turned the page in her notebook and wrote ARCHIVES in big letters.

Miss Lynne tilted her head as if she were thinking. “College libraries often hold even more items in their archives. You might find answers there. But you have to be a member of a college to use their library.” Miss Lynne smiled as she

looked from kid to kid.

Maya's eyes grew wide. "Can someone visit a college library with a member?" she asked.

Miss Lynne threw back her head and laughed. "Yes, some *one*—or two or three or more—can visit a college library as guests of a member—and that member would be me!"

Julian whooped.

Mac whooped, too.



Maya reached up to grab her neighbor's hand and twirled into a hug for Miss Lynne.

Yoko was thinking of words that rhyme with archives. *Bee hives, deep-sea dives, fresh chives, high-fives.* That's a good one, she thought.

"High fives for the archives!" she cheered, slapping Lacey's hand.

"Keep me posted," said Mr. Esposito. He hopped into the golf cart.

"Wait!" said Lacey. "Who is going to be in charge of keeping the cannonball?"

"The maybe-cannonball," Julian said.

"Oh, my!" Mr. Esposito hit his forehead and his cap fell off again. "I hadn't thought of that."

"We found it in the park, and the park is public property," said Julian. "It doesn't belong to us."

*Stink bug!* Mac sighed. He had hoped they could keep the cannonball in his tree house — even if it was only a maybe-cannonball.

“I’ll lock it up in the garden shed and contact the city parks department,” Mr. Esposito offered.

Julian took a few pictures of the maybe-cannonball with his tablet before Mr. Esposito drove off.

Miss Lynne turned to the kids. “Just thinking about research makes me hungry. How about lunch at Sullivan’s Hot Dog Stand before we hit the stacks? My treat.”

“Yes!” Mac answered for them all. He wasn’t sure what it meant to hit the stacks, but he was sure that Sullivan’s had the best hot dogs around.



Book 1  
Chapter Twelve

# Primary Sources

**T**he kids found the local history room across from the elevator on the third floor of the college library.

“Shhh,” Mac whispered as they entered the room. None of his friends had spoken, but libraries are quiet spaces. Mac wanted to be sure they didn’t bother anyone. He looked around. No one was in the local history room except his friends and Miss Lynne.

Lacey walked toward a long glass case in the center of the room. She peered inside. Thin

crinkled papers rested beside fancy pens like the kind Sherlock Holmes might have used. There were yellowed newspapers and black and white photos.

The kids spread out around the room. Everywhere they looked, they found a piece of local history.

Some cases held old brass tools. Others held books with gold bindings and frayed satin markers. Wooden plaques told how old the item was and why it was important.

Yoko studied a framed brown and white map with fancy printing that hung on the wall.

“Everything here looks really old,” whispered Mac.

“These documents and items are called artifacts,” Miss Lynne explained. “They offer an important view into our history.”

Lacey tilted her head. “Is an artifact sort of like evidence in a mystery?”

Miss Lynne nodded. “An artifact is something from a particular time in history.” She moved aside so Maya could get a better look inside the display case in front of them. “Artifacts are priceless because they are primary sources.”

Maya was curious. “What’s a primary source?”

“Primary sources offer firsthand information.” Miss Lynne pointed to a worn leather diary with initials on the front. “Primary sources can also be accounts from people.”

“Like an eye witness!” exclaimed Lacey. “Someone who was there.”

“So a primary source would be someone who watches a ballet instead of reading about it in the newspaper or on a blog, or hearing about it on TV or the radio?” said Maya.

Julian nodded. “A primary source also could be someone who performs in the ballet.”

Miss Lynne held up a finger. “Keep in mind, though, primary source information can be inaccurate or biased.”

“Biased?” repeated Yoko.

“If you and I go to the ballet and we both watch the performance, but you love ballet and I don’t, we may have different views of the performance,” explained Miss Lynne.

“You might be wishing you were fishing instead,” said Mac.



Maya rolled her eyes, but Yoko laughed. Mac had made a rhyme without even realizing it.

Maya turned toward a case holding a model ship. “The Griffon!” she exclaimed, pointing to the plaque.

The kids gathered around. The model ship was made from thin, polished pieces of wood. It was long and narrow. The sides of the ship were curvy. Four masts flew above. A bird-like creature perched on the bow, or the front of the ship. A horse with wings seemed to guard the back of the ship. The plaque said the Griffon was built in 1679. It might have looked like this.

Julian pulled his tablet out of his backpack. “May I take some pictures?” he asked Miss Lynne.

She pointed to a sign on the wall. “As long as you don’t use the flash,” she said.

Yoko knew why the sign was there.

“A flash is a splash of really bright light

It may not cause damage,

But then again it might.”

“That’s exactly right,” said Miss Lynne.

This time all the kids laughed. And so did Miss Lynne. She realized she had added to Yoko’s rhyme.

Maya took a closer look at the prow of the ship. “That creature looks like an eagle from the front, but it has legs and a tail like a lion.”

Julian and Mac leaned in.

“It looks like a video game character,” said Mac.

“Or a character in a fairy tale or a myth,” said Julian.

“The ship was named the Griffon. Do you think that has anything to do with this creature?” asked Yoko.

Julian clicked and then read from his tablet. “The griffon is found in Greek and Egyptian legends. It has the body, tail, and back legs of a lion. Its upper body has the head, wings, and talons of an eagle. The griffon guards treasures.”

Mac turned to Maya. “Your street is named after a legendary creature!”

“I think maybe Maya’s street was named after the ship that was named after a legendary creature,” suggested Julian.

“The griffon—the creature—guards treasures,” Yoko mused. “So it could be that the Griffon—the ship—held treasures.”

“Maya’s street is not only named after an old ship, it’s named after an old treasure ship!” Mac was excited all over again.

“Let’s see,” said Yoko. She held out her hand and began counting on her fingers. “We went to the park to hunt for a dogwood and we found what might be a cannonball.”

“We came to the library to see what we could learn about the maybe-cannonball, and we found a model of the Griffon,” Julian added.

“Now I want to know more about the Griffon,” said Lacey.

“And if the cannonball came from the Griffon.” Yoko glanced at Julian. “The maybe-cannonball,” she corrected herself before he had a chance.

“How do we figure out if the Griffon and the maybe-cannonball are connected?” asked Maya.

Lacey opened her notebook again.



Book 1

Chapter Thirteen

# Narrow the Search

**M**ac looked around the room. “There are so many artifacts here! My head is getting fuzzy!”

Yoko looked at Mac’s coonskin cap and giggled.

Julian recalled what Mrs. Schieber had said. “Let’s start with what we know. Then we can figure out what we need to find out.”

Mac groaned.

“What do we do when we want to find out something, like who invented Pac Man, or when

the next superhero action figure in the series is coming out?” asked Julian.

“We look it up on the internet,” said Mac.

“We type in a question.”

Maya nodded. “We have to come up with a question before we look for an answer.”

Miss Lynne patted her shoulder. “That’s called narrowing the search. And once you do that, research becomes easier to tackle.”

Yoko liked the sound of that.

“Narrow the search, zero in

Then you’re ready to begin.

Focus on a question or two

Look for answers, find a clue.”

Lacey’s pencil was ready. “What do we want to know?”

“I’m curious about the Griffon,” said Maya.

“Who built it and why? What was it used for?”

“Could the maybe-cannonball have been fired from the Griffon?” asked Yoko.

“Did the Griffon have a cannon?” Julian wondered.

“Did it fire the cannon? Mac added.

Lacey read their questions back to them. “Let’s keep these questions in mind as we investigate.”

Miss Lynne looked at her watch. “The library closes in an hour.” She sat down and pulled a stack of students’ papers and a green pen with a T. rex on top from her bag. “I’m going to grade these papers. Let me know if I can help with anything.”

The kids circled the room.

They read.

They wondered.

They thought.

And they learned.

Lacey moved back and forth between her friends. She took pages of notes.

It was exciting. It was fun!

But after awhile, Lacey’s hand was tired from writing.

Julian’s shirt was untucked and rumped.

Maya yawned.

Yoko rested her head in her hand.

Mac flipped the tail on his hat from one side of his head to the other. He did it again. And again.

Lacey was rubbing her fingers when the librarian stepped in. “The library will be closing in ten minutes.”

Miss Lynne stretched and stuffed the papers and pen into her bag. “Research—and correcting papers—is hard work,” she said. “You know what I think?” She kept her voice low. “It’s time for cookies and lemonade!”

The friends clapped...softly. They were in the library, after all.

Book 1  
Chapter Fourteen

# Is It Important?

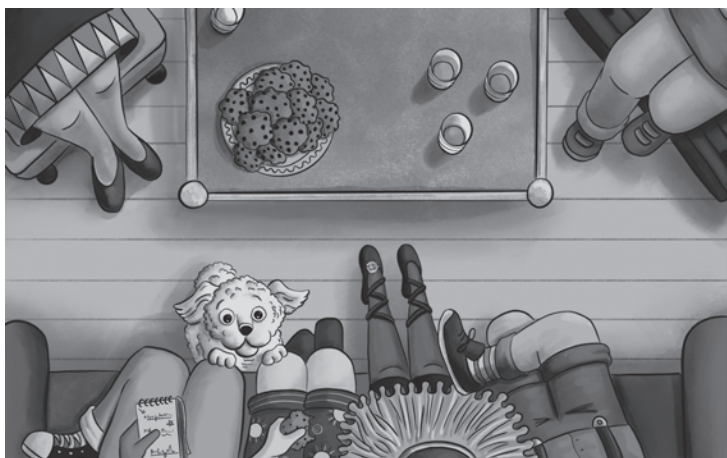
**T**he kids settled on Miss Lynne's porch with a tray of lemonade and cookies. Pesky wagged his tail. He seemed happy to be with his friends. And happy when a crumb or two fell to the floor.

Lacey tucked her feet beneath her and laid her notebook on her lap.

"Our list of facts is long," she said.

"Read us one at a time. If it doesn't answer our questions, we can cross it out," suggested Maya.

"Agreed," Julian said. "If it doesn't tell us something about the Griffon and the cannon, it's not important to our research."



Lacey began reading.

- Father Hennepin erected a church on Cayuga Island around 1678-1679.

“I live on Hennepin Avenue,” said Mac. “Now I know where the name came from.”

“That is awesome,” said Julian. “But it doesn’t answer our questions.”

The kids agreed. Lacey crossed it out and read the next fact.

- Father Hennepin was a priest who came with the explorer Rene-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de LaSalle to the New World.

“Wow, that’s a long name!” said Mac. “I wouldn’t want to be that explorer learning how to spell my name in kindergarten.”

Yoko giggled. “True,” she agreed. “But that fact doesn’t help us.”

Lacey drew a line through the fact.

Mac swayed back and forth on the porch swing. He liked that it hung from ropes hooked into the ceiling.

- *The Griffon was a ship built by LaSalle, Father Hennepin, and others.*

“Well...” said Maya, “that’s a fact about the Griffon.” She pulled a lone droopy dandelion from her shoe. “But it doesn’t tell us anything about the cannon.”

- *The Griffon launched in July 1679.*

“That could be important,” said Julian.

“Why?” Yoko wiped a splash of lemonade on her sunglasses with a corner of her shirt.

“Because if we figure out how old the cannonball is, we’ll know if it could be from the

Griffon,” said Julian.

Yoko high-fived Julian.

- *The Griffon may have been the first sailing vessel built by explorers to sail the upper Great Lakes.*

“Wow! And it was built right here.” Maya paused. “But I guess that’s not important for our research.”

The friends agreed.

*Zip.* Lacey crossed it out.

- *The Griffon may have been larger than any other vessel on the lakes at the time.*

“Same,” said Julian.

- *The Griffon is known to have been a 40 ton vessel with three masts, a foremast, main and mizzen, and several square sails.*

“Cool beans!” said Mac. He looked at his friends. “But not important?”

Heads nodded, and Lacey crossed it out.

- *The Griffon was armed with seven cannons.*

“Important!” all the kids shouted at once.

Lacey put a star next to that fact.



- The Griffon launched in the Cayuga Creek channel of the upper Niagara River with the roar of her cannons.

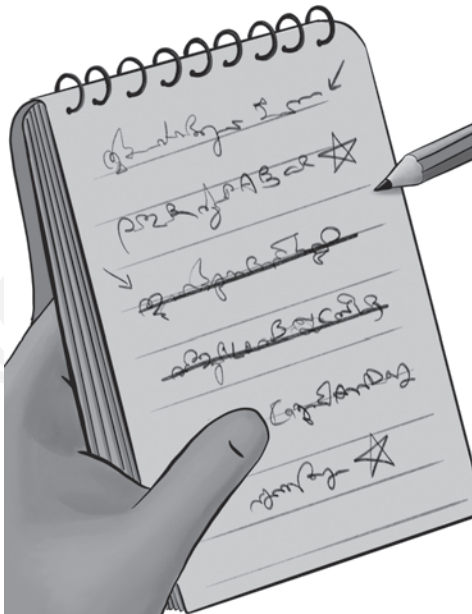
“Very important!” said Julian.

Lacey put two stars next to that fact.

- The Griffon was armed with two cannons and three rail guns.

“Very, very important!” said Mac.

“Wait a minute,” said Lacey. “This says two cannons.” She ran her finger up the page, “but here it says ‘seven cannons’.”



Maya's brows bunched. "That doesn't make sense."

"Finding facts that don't match can happen when doing research," said Miss Lynne. "You'll have to recheck your sources. Make sure you got it right."

*Stink bug!* Mac thought to himself.

"That's why when we were at the library you suggested we write down the sources of the facts we collected," said Yoko.

"But what if we did get it right?" asked Maya. "What if sources have different information?"

"Then you can try to determine which source is more credible or believable," said Miss Lynne.

Mac groaned. "That means even more research."

Lacey circled the facts that didn't agree. "Think of it this way. Doing research is like being a detective. Some leads—or facts—are helpful..."

"And some are just confusing," said Maya.

Lacey read the next fact:

- La Salle, seeking the Northwest Passage to China and Japan, sailed the Griffon across Lake Erie, Lake Huron, and Lake Michigan.

“China and Japan!” exclaimed Yoko. “You can’t get there from the Great Lakes!”

Julian laughed. “Well, we know that now, but back then the explorers were, well, exploring. They didn’t know that yet.”

Lacey kept reading. The next two facts didn’t answer any of their questions. But the fact after that did.

- ~~The Griffon sailed to the interior of North America, where previously only canoes had traveled.~~
- ~~The Griffon was filled with furs.~~
- The Griffon landed in Michigan to trade goods for furs with Native Americans

Lacey read the final three facts:

- La Salle got off the ship and sent it back to Niagara.
- The Griffon disappeared along the way.
- The Griffon never returned to Niagara and has never been found.

Suddenly, Mac was excited again. “This is turning out to be just like a real mystery!”

“The Griffon and that cannonball aren’t *like* real mysteries, they *are* real mysteries,” said Lacey, closing her notebook.

The Cayuga Island Kids had learned so much.

They knew who built the Griffon. And they knew why.

But was the maybe-cannonball a *for-sure* cannonball? Was it fired from the Griffon?

The kids had some answers. They just didn’t have *all* the answers. There was more to find out. But that was okay. Tomorrow was another day of summer vacation.



Book 1  
Chapter Fifteen

# Day Two

**L**acey awoke to a tickle. A ticklish spray. She opened her eyes. Cold drops of water were coming through the open window.

It was raining. Hard. Lacey sat up quickly. She wiped her face with the sheet and put her feet on the floor.

Now they were wet, too. Lacey looked down to find a thin puddle. Her toes were right smack in the middle of it.

She was about to close the window when Pesky bounded into her room. He rounded the

side of the bed. He hit the puddle. *Splash!* Now Lacey was wet up to her knees.

Pesky jumped up and wagged his drippy tail.

“Ack!” Lacey sputtered. She felt wet from head to toe. And it wasn’t a fun wet like splashing in the pool at Auntie RoRo’s house or playing in the sprinkler slide on Yoko’s lawn.

But Pesky didn’t seem to mind being wet. He yipped and wagged and wagged and yipped.

Lacey laughed and patted her pup. “Let’s go find a towel,” she said. On the way, she closed the window.



Mac looked out the window above the kitchen sink. It was dark even though it was morning. Rain splashed from the gutters. Wavy ribbons of water dribbled down the panes of glass. Everything in the yard looked crooked.

Mac turned on the faucet to fill his glass. Outside the window, he noticed a chipmunk

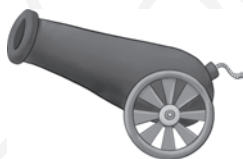
scurrying across the patio. It dodged planters and weaved between railings. Mac leaned forward as the chipmunk disappeared under the chair cover.

Water from the faucet sprayed Mac's pajama top. It trickled to his toes. Mac shook off the water and wiped his hands on his pajama pants. He'd clean up the dribbles on the floor later. Right now, he was hungry.



Just as he reached into the cupboard for the box of Pop-Pops, thunder cracked. Mac jumped and cereal scattered. It landed on the counter. It landed on the wet floor. It even landed in Mac's hair.

"Stink bug!" said Mac. He stepped around the cereal and reached for his frontiersman bowl. He slid his arm across the counter, clearing spilled cereal to make space for the jug of milk. He'd clean the counter later. Right now, he was hungry.



Julian was eating his breakfast and reading the back of the cereal box when the phone buzzed.

"Hi," said Mac. "What are you doing?" Julian could hear Mac chewing on the other end of the phone.



“The same thing you’re doing,” said Julian.  
“I’m eating breakfast. And I’m reading.”

“How do you know I’m eating breakfast?”  
Mac asked around a mouth full of cereal.

Julian laughed. “It’s no mystery. The clue is I can hear you munching.”

“Sorry,” said Mac before chomping on another spoonful.

“Did you know that puffed cereals are made using a pressure-cooking method? It’s called “gun-puffing.” Quaker Oats used a cannon converted into a pressure cooker in the early 1900s.”

Mac stopped chewing and studied his spoonful of Pop-Pops. “No way!” He jumped off his stool and opened the lower cupboard. “My mom has one of those!”

“A cannon?” Julian joked. He laughed when he heard Mac laughing. He pictured milk spraying out of his friend’s nose.

“If you can make a pressure cooker out of a cannon, I wonder if I could make a cannon out

of Mom's pressure cooker," said Mac. "Speaking of cannons," he interrupted himself, "how are we going to work on solving our mystery today?"

Julian looked out the window. The sky was jammed with dark clouds. The sun was nowhere in sight. "Rainy days are perfect for reading research," he said.

Mac didn't answer. But Julian could hear him chewing.



Maya was chewing on the end of her hair ribbon. She was searching the closet for her most favorite purple umbrella. It was the perfect day to use it—as soon as she knew where she was going, of course.

The umbrella was propped beside Maya's most favorite purple rubber boots. Now she was really eager to know where she was going today. She had two favorites to wear—not counting the purple satin ribbon she would tie in her hair.

Thunder cracked. The sound brought to mind the cannonball they had discovered yesterday. Tingles tickled Maya's spine every time she thought of it.

Sparky's tail fluffed out as she skittered across the room and into Maya's closet. The cat huddled in the middle of a pile of mostly purple dancing scarves. Sparky did not like thunder.



Maya drew her cat onto her lap. “You definitely would not like being a passenger on the Griffon,” she murmured. She nuzzled Sparky and rubbed her ears. “It wouldn’t matter if it had seven cannons or two!”

Suddenly, like a bolt of lightning, a thought came to Maya. “That’s it!” She jumped up and twirled, hugging her cat to her chest. “Thank you, Sparky! Wait until I tell the others!”

Sparky squinted at Maya and purred.

Maya gently put her cat back on the pile of scarves in the closet. Now she knew where she was going. She had to meet up with her friends!





Meanwhile, Yoko was dreaming of explorers and griffons. She was sailing the Great Lakes. It was cold and windy. The water was choppy.

A loud noise woke her, and she opened her eyes. Were those cannons firing in the distance? She looked left and right. Was that a pile of furs?

No, she was not sailing on the Griffon. She was in her bedroom. And those weren't furs. It was just her fuzzy buffalo blanket bunched into a heap.

*Boom!*

And those weren't cannons firing. It was thunder!

Yoko looked out the window. The wind was blowing. It was cold and rainy.

"Thunder daps, lightning zaps  
spark and boom through my room."

Yoko stretched and pulled her blanket to her chin.

A summer storm always made her want to snuggle under the covers.

Yoko closed her eyes.

Could she get back to her dream? She thought about the explorers. She thought about the Griffon. She thought about the maybe-cannonball.

Suddenly she had an idea.

Yoko threw back the covers. She had to tell her friends.

Book 1

Chapter Sixteen

# Rainy Day, Bright Ideas

**Y**oko stood on Julian's porch. She jiggled with excitement as she peeked from under her sopping hood.

"Come on in," said Julian. "Mac's here and Lacey is on her way."

"Maya is coming, too," Mac called from the kitchen. "She just needs to find her most favorite purple something or other and then she'll be right over."

Yoko hung her very wet hoodie on a hook. "It's probably her purple slicker," she said. "It's

really raining hard.” Whatever it was, Yoko hoped Maya found it right away. She was eager to share her idea, but she would wait until everyone arrived.

Julian led the way into the kitchen and was just about to offer Yoko some juice when the doorbell rang again.

“It’s open!” Mac called out.

Lacey kicked off her soggy sneakers and shook out her hair. She hadn’t brought an umbrella or worn a jacket. Why bother? She had started the day off wet from head to toe. Her notebook was dry, though. Lacey had tucked it safely beneath her shirt in the waistband of her jeans.

Now, Lacey pulled it out. She flipped to the last page of notes. “Yesterday was an exciting day. Mysteries. Hunts. Discoveries. Lots of questions. And some answers.”

“Which led to more questions,” said Mac.

Yoko looked out the window. “Too bad it’s raining today.”



“It’s a great day for reading research,” said Mac.

Julian laughed. Mac had been listening to him on the phone after all.

Julian placed a stack of glasses on the table beside the juice. “Help yourself,” he said. The doorbell rang again, and Julian let Maya in.

“I figured something out!” Maya sprang onto her toes. She couldn’t wait to tell her friends. “It doesn’t matter if the Griffon had two cannons or seven cannons, or whatever number of cannons. As long as it had one, the cannonball we found—if it is a cannonball—could have been fired from the ship!”



Lacey tilted her head to one side. "Right!" She flipped through her notebook and landed on the page of facts. "According to all the sources we checked, there was at least one cannon on the Griffon."

Yoko felt like corn was popping in her belly. She couldn't wait any longer to share her idea with her friends. "I had a dream last night that gave me an idea," she announced.

"Dreams are good like that," said Julian.

"I didn't get any ideas about how to find a dogwood," said Mac, "or how to make arrows from dogwoods. And I was thinking about that all night long." Mac refilled his glass of juice.

"Anyway," Julian said, "what's your idea, Yoko?" He would keep his friends on track.

"You reminded us to start with what we know," said Yoko, "like Mrs. Schieber told us." She took a deep breath. "We know the Griffon was built right here on our island. We discovered a maybe-cannonball in the park. We learned

that the explorers built the Griffon there.” She paused to take another breath. “And,” she nodded toward Maya, “we know the ship had at least one cannon. What we don’t know is if the maybe-cannonball is actually a cannonball, and if it is from the Griffon.”

“That’s two mysteries,” Lacey said.

“We need an expert,” said Yoko.

“Mrs. Schieber?” asked Mac.

“I think we need to find someone who can look at the maybe-cannonball and tell us if it is a for-sure cannonball,” said Yoko.

“And if it is,” said Julian slowly, “could it have been shot from the Griffon.”

“How do we find that expert?” asked Mac.

“Research!” said Julian.

“I knew you’d say that,” said Mac.

Julian turned on his tablet.

Lacey flipped to a new page in her notebook.

Outside, it was still raining. But that didn’t matter.

Inside, the Cayuga Island Kids were busy doing research.

ARC  
NOT FOR SALE

Book 1  
Chapter Seventeen

# Teamwork

**W**hen the doorbell rang again, Mac looked around the room.

“Who could that be?” he asked. His friends were all here. Well, except for Pesky. Even though he was a very smart dog and could probably figure out how to ring the doorbell, Mac didn’t think he could reach it.

“Another mystery,” said Lacey.

Maya rose on her toes and looked out the window.

“It’s Mr. Esposito,” she said. “He’s carrying a lumpy sack over his shoulder.”

Julian pushed back his chair and rose to

answer the door.

Yoko stood beside Maya at the window. She could see Mr. Esposito had a cap on. Rain dripped from the visor. It dripped from his coat. He was making a puddle on Julian's porch. Just like that, a rhyme popped into Yoko's head.

"The wind is whipping Mr. E. is dripping,  
And the sack he's gripping is slipping!"

Mac raced past Julian to get to the door.

"Mr. Esposito is not a drip! He's very nice."

"I didn't say..." Yoko said.

Mac flung open the door.

"You're dripping!" said Mac.

"I am," agreed Mr. Esposito. "And this sack is slipping. May I come in?"

Julian hung his neighbor's coat on the last hook.

Mr. Esposito carefully lowered the heavy sack. "Since it's raining outside, I can't work in the park," he said. "So I can help with your research instead."



Mr. Esposito opened the sack and removed a smaller bag. Inside that was the maybe-cannonball wrapped in paper towels.

“We found some photos of cannonballs that seem to match this one.” Julian showed Mr. Esposito a series of photos.

“We were narrowing the search,” said Lacey.

“Smart,” said Mr. Esposito.

“Some are too big,” said Julian.

“Some are too small,” said Maya.

“Some don’t look like they are made of the same metal,” said Yoko.

“It’s sort of like Goldilocks and the porridge,” said Mac.

“We are also trying to find out what size cannonball the Griffon may have used,” said Maya.

“We need an expert to help us figure out if the maybe-cannonball is actually a cannonball, and if it could be from the Griffon,” said Lacey.

“I may be able to help with that.” Mr. Esposito pulled a wad of damp, folded papers out of his pocket.



He unfolded the papers and smoothed them out. “Dr. Sylvia Spina, one of my golf partners—when I used to play golf—is an archaeologist.”

“A what?” said Mac.

“An archaeologist,” Mr. Esposito repeated.

“Archaeology is the study of artifacts usually dug up from the ground.” Julian looked at his friends. He could tell they wondered how he knew that. “Archaeology was one of the words on my calendar.”

“Ah.” Lacey nodded.

“Do you think she will help us?” Yoko asked Mr. Esposito.

He unfolded the papers. “I have Sylvia’s home, office, and cell phone numbers right here. Let’s find out.”

Book 1  
Chapter Eighteen

# Questions

**T**he next day the sun was shining again. Mr. Esposito wore his cap, but it was no longer dripping. He waved to Maya as he set off for the park.

Maya waved back. After all that rain, Mr. Esposito would have plenty to do in the park. He would be busy—and muddy—today.

But yesterday he was able to reach Dr. Sylvia Spina, archaeologist. They talked on the phone. He laughed and nodded his head. He winked at the kids, who were all watching and waiting. When Mr. Esposito finally finished nodding and talking, he gave them the good news. His friend was eager to see the maybe-cannonball.

“Sylvia doesn’t get wound up about many things. But,” Mr. Esposito’s eyes crinkled, “when she heard about what you found in the park, she said, ‘Intriguing!’ For Sylvia, that’s as good as jumping up and down and clapping at the same time.”

Mac tried jumping up and down and clapping at the same time. It was fun.

Dr. Spina had agreed to meet the kids and Mr. Esposito at the park garage at four o’clock.



Maya was excited. Thanks to Mr. Esposito, they had found an artifact expert—an archaeologist! Dr. Spina was kind to offer to help.

Maya decided right then to make Dr. Spina a thank you card. She would use real flower petals and curly ribbon. She would write THANK

YOU in fancy letters with her favorite purple glitter pen. All her friends could sign it.

Just thinking about it made Maya smile. She twirled toward the backyard garden. After she picked the flowers, she planned to check the spelling of *archaeologist*. Her head was full of thank you thoughts.



Yoko's head was full of thoughts, too. Getting to meet an archaeologist was exciting.

And Sylvia Spina was a very flowy name.

Yoko imagined Sylvia Spina with long wavy hair flowing to her waist.

She imagined Sylvia Spina as tall and strong.

She probably wore steel-toed boots to the dig sites. And safety goggles.

Yoko pictured Sylvia Spina gliding in a flowy way, even though she wore steel-toed boots.



Yoko imagined Sylvia Spina as having a flowy, rippling laugh. And she imagined hearing that laugh when she shared a rhyme about her.

Yoko wondered what words rhymed with Sylvia Spina. Well, she had the whole day to work on that.

Yoko could hardly wait to meet Sylvia Spina.



Julian could hardly wait to meet Dr. Spina, either.

A real live archaeologist!

He wondered if she dug up artifacts all day.

Where would she do that?

Or did she spend most of her time studying artifacts that were already dug up?

Where would the artifacts come from? Were they delivered to her? How did she study them? What clues did she look for? How did she know what clues to look for?

What would Dr. Spina think of the maybe-cannonball?

Julian had so many questions. And the more questions he thought of, the more excited he was to meet Dr. Spina.



Mac was excited, too.

And worried.

Would Dr. Spina want to take the maybe-cannonball somewhere to study it?

What if that took a long time? What if they never saw it again?



Mac wondered if Dr. Spina had ever dug up a dinosaur bone. How would she know it was a dinosaur bone and not a steak bone some lucky dog had buried?

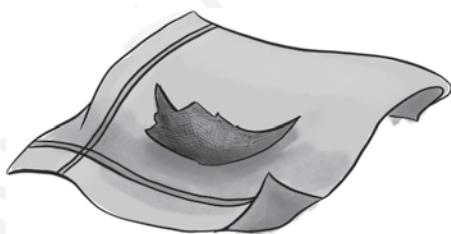
Mac wondered if dust and dirt from all that digging makes an archaeologist sneeze.

Did Dr. Spina keep a giant box of tissues at her desk? Did she have a desk?

Did she have a collection of fossils?

Had Dr. Spina ever seen hieroglyphics? Could she tell what the symbols meant?

Mac's head was spinning.



Lacey's head was spinning, too.



She thought about all the history that had taken place right here on Cayuga Island—and she hadn't even known about it until three days ago!

She thought about the explorers of the Niagara Frontier.

She thought about the Griffon.

And she thought about the maybe-cannonball, of course.

Lacey flipped open her notebook and read over her notes again. This sure was one exciting mystery.

She carefully unfolded the tissue holding the bit of metal that had fallen from the ball. She looked at it closely. It beat anything she had found—or hoped to find—in any of the alleys on Cayuga Island.

Did it hold any clues? It just looked like a metal flake to her. But maybe it could help Dr. Spina crack this case. Lacey folded up the tissue and tucked it in her pocket. Her heart raced with excitement.



Meanwhile, Pesky raced in his dream.

Lacey had stayed up way too late last night flipping the pages of big thick library books. So Pesky had stayed awake, too.

After all, a dog never knows when his person might get hungry from all that page flipping and decide to go hunting for a late-night snack.

And it's a dog's job to follow his person wherever they go. Especially when they go hunting. And most especially when they go hunting for a late-night snack.



Morning inched its way to afternoon. Finally, it was time for the kids to head to the park.

Maya slipped into her most favorite purple flip flops. She tucked the thank you card she had made into her most favorite purple plastic purse that looked just like the one in her most favorite picture book about a plastic purse.

Yoko put on her sunglasses and skipped out the door. In her mind she went over the words she had thought of that rhymed with Sylvia Spina. *Spiralina, concertina, Wilhemina*. None of them made much sense in a poem about an archaeologist. She would keep thinking on her way to the park.

Mac was ready when Julian came by. He had a question for his best friend. But before Mac had a chance to ask it, Lacey and Pesky hurried up the sidewalk. Maya and Yoko were waiting at the corner.

Together, the friends walked toward the park.

Mac was jumpy. Julian could tell by the way he sort of hop-walked.

“Everything okay?” Julian asked.

Mac nodded yes. Then he shook his head no. “Do you think Sylvia Spina will take away our cannonball?” he blurted.

“I hope so,” Julian said. When Mac frowned, Julian explained. “That would mean she wants to study it.”

“What if we never see it again?” Mac worried.

Julian put his arm around his friend’s shoulders. “We might see it in a science magazine, or on the news, or even in a museum.”

Lacey paused while Pesky sniffed a tree. “I wonder if Dr. Spina will let us visit her lab—or,” her eyes brightened, “a dig site! I’d love to see an archaeologist at work.”

“Me, too,” Julian said.

Maya pointed. Up ahead, Mr. Esposito stood outside the park garage. Beside him a short, round woman with spiky red hair was laughing. “It looks like we’ll find out soon.”

Book 1

Chapter Nineteen

# An Afternoon of Answers

**I**nside the park garage, Mr. Esposito had laid a clean white plastic sheet across the potting table. The maybe-cannonball rested there. A bright light dangled from the rafters above it. Dr. Spina and the kids gathered around.

Dr. Spina was silent as she bent over the round metal ball. She examined it carefully. “Hmmm,” she murmured.

Dr. Spina moved her head from side to side. She studied the ball from all angles as if it were a rare jewel.

“Hmmm,” she murmured again.

Dr. Spina pulled a shiny metal tool about the size of a pencil from her shirt pocket. She used it to turn the maybe-cannonball slowly. Fine bits of metal fell onto the plastic sheet. Sylvia Spina swept the dust into a pile with a tiny brush she had pulled from the same shirt pocket. She rubbed the dust gently between her fingers. She held it to her nose. She sniffed.

Lacey took the tissue holding the metal flake from the park out of her pocket. She offered it to Dr. Spina “This came off the ball when we were digging it up, and I saved it. I thought it might be a clue.”

“Ah!” Dr. Spina gently lifted the thin metal piece from the tissue. She turned it over and studied it some more.

Her sturdy boot tap-tap-tapped on the cement floor.

The kids watched as Dr. Spina leaned in close. She looked at the metal flake. She looked

at the ball. Then she looked at the flake again.

They kept silent when she said “hmmm” again.

Mac was counting. Dr. Spina had said “hmmm” three times. He wondered what “hmmm” meant when an archaeologist said it three times. It was hard to wait. He was eager to know.

Mac looked at his friends. He could tell they were eager to know, too.

Julian was holding his breath.

A row of squiggles crossed Lacey’s forehead. It looked like his paper when he tried to draw straight lines without a ruler.

Maya was standing still. Neither of her feet was moving.

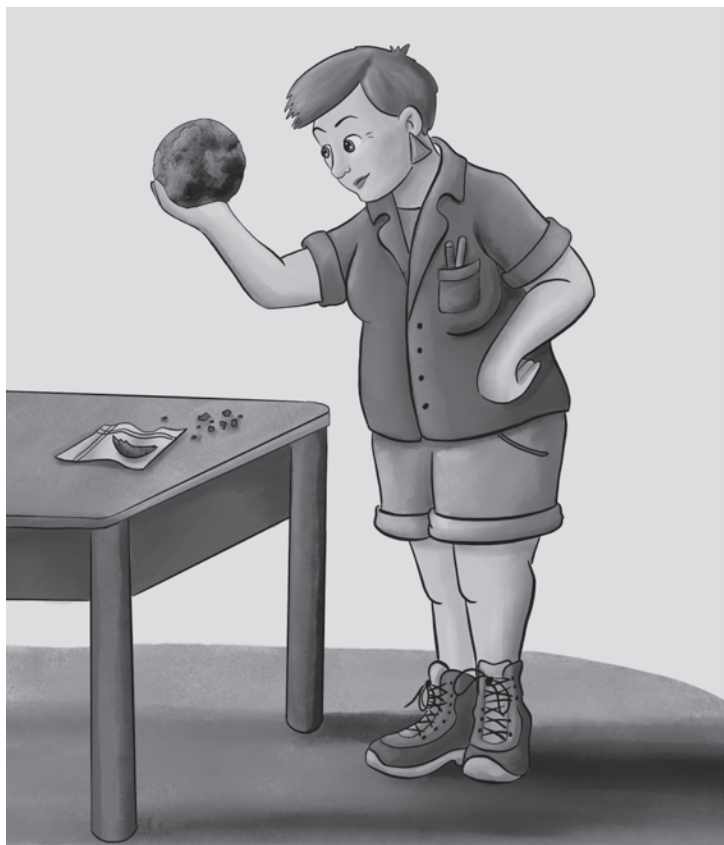
Even Yoko was paying attention instead of daydreaming. Her eyes were fixed on Dr. Spina.

Finally, Dr. Spina straightened. “May I?” she asked, holding her hands just above the ball.

“Sure,” said Mr. Esposito.

Dr. Spina carefully lifted the maybe-

cannonball. She held it an arm's length away. Slowly she lowered it a few inches. She lifted and lowered it again.



“Hmmm,” she said.

Mac fidgeted.



Maya adjusted her purse.

Yoko's eyes drifted to the ceiling.

Julian cleared his throat.

Lacey fingered her notebook in her back pocket.

Mr. Esposito rocked back and forth. He removed his cap and ran his hands through his hair. "What do you think, Sylvia?" he spouted. He replaced his cap and tugged it into place. "The suspense is killing me!"

The kids seemed to take in one long breath and let it out.

Dr. Spina smiled and placed the ball back on the table. She fingered the new sprinkle of metal dust it had made.

"Hmmm," she said once more.

She crossed her arms. She drummed her fingers on her elbows. Then she turned and faced the kids. "Here's what I know for sure," she began.

Lacey pulled the notebook from her pocket. She slid the pencil from behind her ear.

“This is indeed a cannonball...” Dr. Spina began.

She paused while the kids and Mr. Esposito cheered.

“It is old. And it’s made of iron,” she continued. “I was sure once I saw that metal flake.” She smiled at Lacey. “And my guess is that the cannonball weighs about ten or twelve pounds.” Dr. Spina shrugged her shoulders. “Figuring all that out was easy.”

Lacey stopped writing and looked up.

“What we don’t know—what we can’t know—is whether this cannonball came from the Griffon,” Dr. Spina said quietly. “The ship sank somewhere in the Great Lakes in 1679. Since it was never found, there is no way to know if this cannonball is from the ship.”

Lacey stopped writing. “A cold case,” she said.

“A what?” Mac said.

“A cold case,” Lacey repeated. “The mystery of the Griffon was never solved. But it took place so long ago, it isn’t being investigated anymore.”

Julian sagged.

Maya slumped.

Yoko thoughts swirled. *Oh no! I hate to think we’ll never know.*

“But, like any cold case,” added Dr. Spina, “it remains open. If new information about the Griffon were to be discovered, it would spur investigation.”

Julian nodded. The disappointment he felt was reflected in his friends’ faces. “However,” Dr. Spina clapped her hands together. Her eyes sparkled. “The fact remains that you,” she spread her arms wide to include all of the kids, “have uncovered an artifact!”

“Like all that stuff in the library!” Mac thought about jumping up and down and clapping his hands. Instead, he fist-bumped Julian.

Dr. Spina smiled at the brightened faces around her. “This cannonball has a story. It is a piece of Cayuga Island history—whether it’s from the Griffon or from another chapter in the island’s past. I’m looking forward to examining it more closely to learn what clues it has for us.”

“So...” Maya’s eyes widened, “we *maybe* discovered a piece of the Griffon’s story.”

Julian let out a puff of air. “This *for-sure* cannonball may be part of one of the biggest unsolved mysteries ever to take place in the Great Lakes!”

“And,” Lacey hugged her notebook to her chest, “in the history of Cayuga Island.”

Yoko giggled. “I like that. The biggest mystery in our island’s history!”

“Hmmm.” Dr. Spina looked at each of the kids and nodded. “I would tend to agree.”

Book 1

Chapter Twenty

# Mystery Solved

**T**he friends walked across the park toward home. Wind was blowing through the trees and clouds were forming. It felt like it might rain again. But the kids weren't paying attention to the clues that another summer storm was on its way.

"I'm glad Dr. Spina agreed to take the cannonball to study it some more," Mac said.

"Hmmm." Julian's head swiveled and he grinned at his friend.

"I hope someday we learn more about the Griffon mystery. Maybe the cannonball will be a clue that helps, or maybe it will unlock some

other mystery,” Lacey said.

“Dr. Spina is sure to learn something from our artifact,” said Julian.

Lacey smiled widely. “Just knowing that the cannonball we discovered is an artifact is pretty exciting.”

“And your wish is coming true,” said Maya.

Lacey looked at her, confused.

“You said you wished you could visit an archaeological dig site, and we can!” Maya explained. “We can go to the park and watch Dr. Spina dig up the area where we found the cannonball.”

Mac nodded. “I bet she finds more of those metal flakes like the one you gave her.”

“Even Mr. Esposito is excited that she’s going to be digging in the park!” Maya kidded.

“Besides the dig, I can’t wait to visit her lab,” said Julian.

“That is going to be fab,” Yoko agreed.

“It was really nice of her to invite us,” said Julian.

Maya held her hands to her heart. "I'm so happy Dr. Spina liked the card we gave her."

The kids paused while Pesky sniffed a lamp post. He had a mystery of his own to investigate.

"This case may be cold, but it is not closed." Lacey patted her back pocket where her notebook was safely stowed.

Pesky lost interest in his mystery, and the kids continued walking. They spotted Miss Lynne covering her porch swing. She was stacking a pile of papers and a cup and saucer. She waved to the kids. "Another storm is brewing!" She pointed to the sky. "Time to batten down the hatches!"

Mac wasn't sure what *batten down the hatches* meant, but he figured it had something to do with getting ready for a storm.

Yoko and Maya headed toward Griffon Avenue.

"See you tomorrow!" Maya said to the others. The wind gusted and her hair curled around her face like a pair of fluffy earphones.

“See you later, alligator!” Yoko linked arms with Maya and they skipped off.

Julian, Mac, and Lacey walked a little faster. At Lacey’s house, Mac leaned over to rub Pesky’s ear. Lacey promised to show Julian the library books she had checked out before she returned them.

On Hennepin Avenue, Julian and Mac spotted Mrs. Schieber. She was gathering garden tools into her wheelbarrow.

“More rain is on the way!” she called out. She pointed to the trees. “Look at the way the leaves are turning in on themselves. Better get home.”

Mac held onto his coonskin cap. The tail tickled his ear as it swung in the wind. Julian hugged his tablet to his chest.

When they reached his house, Mac checked the mailbox and fist-bumped his friend. Julian had a block to go to reach home.

Mac turned up the driveway and stopped. He thought he heard a dog barking. Had Pesky



gotten loose? He looked around, but there was no dog in sight. He shrugged and continued along the sidewalk to the door. A raindrop hit his cheek. Then another and another. The wind swirled. A leaf fluttered down and landed on his powder horn. Another landed on his nose. Mac looked up. And then his eyes grew wide.



*The branches of the tree next to his house were rubbing together. And they sounded just like a dog barking.*

Mac bounded up the porch steps. “Mom!” he yelled. “Is that a dogwood tree in our front yard?”

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**Turn the page to see the real  
cannonball!**



# Is This Story Fact or Fiction?



*The Mystery of the Barking Branches and the Sunken Ship* is both **fact** and **fiction**, because it is based on a true story (fact) but the characters and their adventures are made up (fiction).

The **setting**, or where the story takes place, is real. I grew up on Cayuga Island. It is located exactly where it says it is in the story—a few miles upstream from the mighty Niagara Falls. I've modified the island a bit to fit the story, but overall, if you were to visit you'd find it to be pretty much the way it is described. Changing a

few details of a real place is something an author might do in order to better serve a made-up or **fictional** story.

The **characters** in the Cayuga Island Kids series are **fictional**. They are not real children or adults; however, some of their **characteristics** are based on real people. Parts of their personalities, or what they do, eat, say, or think, are based on the actions of people I know. Real people (and pets!) often inspire fictional characters.

The **plot**, or the events that take place in the story, are **fictional**. What happens in the story came straight from my imagination. However, some important elements in the story are **factual**.

- The cannonball is real! It was found buried in Mike Esposito's backyard when a fence was being installed. Mike Esposito's backyard is across the street from the park on Cayuga Island. Here is a photograph of the actual cannonball.



Does Mike Esposito's name sound familiar? He is the real person upon whom the fictional character, Mr. Esposito, is based. The real Mr. Esposito is a history teacher at Niagara Falls High School in Niagara Falls, New York. He has a warmhearted wife and five terrific kids who enjoy a variety of organized sports as well as just playing around in the park on Cayuga Island.

- The Griffon was really a ship. It was built on Cayuga Island in 1679 for the purpose of fur-trading. On an early voyage, the ship sank

and has never been found. It remains one of the greatest mysteries of the Great Lakes.

Want to learn more about the Griffon, explorers of the Niagara Frontier, the Great Lakes, Niagara Falls, or the rich history of Cayuga Island? How about dogwood trees? I learned about barking branches during my research on dogwood trees—and that interesting piece of information ended up in the story and in the title!

Investigate topics of interest in your school or public library and on safe online sites, just as the Cayuga Island Kids do. Remember what Mrs. Schieber recommends: Always check more than one source. Be a fact detective. Make sure the information is accurate—that it's **fact**, not **fiction**.



*Find Cayuga Island Kids activities and an educator's guide at [www.judybradbury.com](http://www.judybradbury.com) and on [CityofLightPublishing.com](http://CityofLightPublishing.com).*



NOT FOR SALE



**The  
Cayuga Island  
Kids  
Series**

**Book 2**

**The Adventure of the  
Big Fish  
by the Small Creek**



*To Alice DeLaCroix, Marsha Hayles, and Vivian Vande Velde  
for their support, wise counsel, humor, and sisterhood on the  
writing journey.*

*You have made all the difference.*

*~ Judy*



## The Cayuga Island Kids



LACEY



MAC

## Other Cayuga Island Characters



MR. ESPOSITO



MRS. SCHIEBER



MISS LYNNE



JULIAN



MAYA



YOKO



VINCENT



ALICE

# CAYUGA IS

COLLEGE

SULLIVAN  
HOT LOGS



LITTLE  
FREE  
LIBRARY

Miss LYNNE

JOLIET

GRIFFON

MAYA

HENNEPIN

MY HOUSE

CHAMPLAIN

JULIAN



# ISLAND MAP

by MAC





NOT FOR SALE



Book 2  
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*We are all part of someone else's journey*

*That's the way communities are built.*

*~ Mahogany L. Browne*



NOT FOR SALE

Book 2  
Chapter One

# The Cayuga Island Kids

**I**t was the middle of summer vacation, and Lacey was eager to solve another mystery. The Cayuga Island Kids had puzzled over two mysteries so far this summer—and they had solved one of them. Lacey had marked the hunt for barking branches CASE CLOSED in her notebook.

The other mystery would take plenty of experts plenty more time to solve—probably even longer than the summer. After all, no one had cracked the case of the sunken ship, the

Griffon—built right here on Cayuga Island—in more than 300 years!

But that's history. That was the beginning of summer vacation.



This morning, Lacey was thinking about where to hunt for a new mystery to solve. She curled and uncurled her toes. She liked to do that when she was just waking up.

Today, she and her friends would meet in the park. No mystery there. They met in the park most days during the summer. But where would they search for a mystery?

They could explore the alleys that weaved through Cayuga Island. There were seven. Lacey had counted them, and she intended to

investigate each one. After all, wouldn't an alley hold all sorts of secrets and clues?

They could crawl under Mac's porch and see what they discovered there.

Maybe they would visit the library to research what they found under Mac's porch.

Lacey could also borrow a few more mystery books.

Summer was the best time for mysteries.

Lacey stretched her arms and felt around the bookcase headboard for her notebook. It held her collection of clues and questions and notes.

Lacey knew that solving a mystery takes plenty of observing—looking and listening. It takes thinking and asking questions, too. Writing down clues is important. So is keeping notes on the answers to all the questions you ask. That's why Lacey took her notebook with her wherever she went, just as all good detectives do.

But instead of the springy spiral on the edge of her notebook, Lacey felt something cold and

wet in the bookcase headboard.

No mystery there.

It was Pesky's nose.

Lacey's dog liked to stay close to her. The clues were obvious. Every morning when Lacey woke up, Pesky was either on the covers beside her or nestled in the bookcase headboard. Now that it was summer, wherever Lacey went, Pesky went, too.

Lacey ran her fingers through Pesky's bouncy fur. She rubbed his ears. Pesky's tail wiggled.

Then he licked Lacey's hand.

That was a clue. Pesky was hungry.

Lacey threw back the covers. It was time for breakfast.

She padded to the kitchen. Pesky followed.

Lacey noticed that the recycling bin in the back hall was full. Pesky detoured to sniff a can and its lid, a flattened box, and an empty jar. They tumbled together with opened envelopes from yesterday's mail and Gram's yogurt container rinsed clean.

Lacey wondered if there were enough clues for someone to figure out what she and Gram had eaten for dinner last night. She smiled. The yogurt container might throw them off—unless they had seen Gram eating tacos. She liked to heap a scoop of plain yogurt across the top.

It was Lacey's job to empty the recycling bin into the tall, green-lidded container that sat outside the back door. Wheeling the container to the curb once a week was also on Lacey's list of chores. After breakfast, she rinsed the empty dog food can and added it to the recycling bin before she hauled it out.

She and Pesky were ready to set off for the park.



At Mac's house the hero-sized box of Pop-Pops was nearly empty. He peered inside. If he

didn't fill his frontiersman bowl to the brim, there would be just enough cereal for Sookie.

Mac also made sure to leave a little milk in the carton for his sister. Mac smiled to himself. He was being thoughtful.

And he was saving time. It would be Sookie's turn to flatten the empty cereal box and milk carton and put them in the recycling bin. And it would be Sookie's job to write Pop-Pops and milk on the grocery list hanging from the pink hippopotamus clip on the side of the refrigerator. The pencil was missing from the string again. Whoever wrote the next item on the grocery list would have to hunt around for something to write with.

Mac stretched. The sun was shining, and it was summer vacation. That meant no school, no homework, and no lunch to pack. Instead, Mac could pack his powder horn with snacks for later and search for his fishing pole and net.

Mac and his friends were going to the park. They planned to fish and look for frogs and toads



and other wildlife around the creek. Most likely Maya would look for wildflowers.

Mac headed to his room to hunt for his fishing net. That's when he noticed his bed was unmade. *Stink bug!* He had forgotten about that chore. He rolled his pajamas into a ball, stuffed them under his pillow, and pulled up the sheet. Tug, tuck, smooth, done.



Mac found his fishing net behind the desk. He also discovered a riddle book and a few fruit roll wrappers, but he didn't need to bother with those now. He reached for his coonskin cap hanging on the hook behind the bedroom door. The furry tail dangling from the back swished as if waving hello. The cap wasn't really raccoon fur—Mac wouldn't like that. But he liked that it used to be his dad's when he was a kid, and now it was his.

Mac's coonskin cap and powder horn made him feel adventurous. And summer is the best time for adventure. He put on his cap. He slipped his arm through the strap on the powder horn and propped the net across his shoulder. Mac found his fishing pole leaning against his bike in the garage.



While Julian waited for Mac, he decided to read his *Junior Scientist's Word-of-the-Day* calendar.

Julian liked facts. Especially science facts. But this summer he realized he liked history facts, too.

He found out that the island he lived on was settled by fur traders in the 1600s. The streets on Cayuga Island were named after explorers and their ship. The Griffon sank hundreds of years ago, and it was never found. That fact made him curious about local history. And, of course, about the science behind searching for a sunken ship.

Julian flipped the page in the calendar. Each day's word was printed in large, bold letters. Above the word was the day and date. The definition was printed below the word. Today's word was

**ECOSYSTEM**

**ALL THE LIVING ORGANISMS AND  
THEIR NONLIVING ENVIRONMENT IN A  
PARTICULAR PLACE**

Julian was curious to know more. He reached for his tablet. He tapped. He swiped. He read.

**LIVING ORGANISMS** ARE PLANTS, ANIMALS, AND EVEN MICROBES, OR TINY BACTERIA. THEY ARE THE COMMUNITY IN THE ECOSYSTEM.

THE **NONLIVING ENVIRONMENT** OF AN ECOSYSTEM IS THE AIR, DIRT, AND WATER. THEY ARE NOT PART OF THE COMMUNITY.

Now Julian was even more curious.

He thought of a community as a group that lived, worked, or played together. Cayuga Island was a community. There was his school community and his church community. Maya's backyard neighbor, Miss Lynne, called the college where she worked a *higher-learning community*. Lacey's grandmother exercised at the senior citizen community center. Online communities played games together.

Now Julian knew that the living parts of an ecosystem are also a community. But Julian

wondered. Organisms need water, air, and even dirt to survive. So why aren't they part of the ecosystem community?

Julian was puzzling over this when he spotted Mac coming up the front walk. He tucked the tablet into his backpack. It would stay dry there. He reached for his fishing pole and net. He remembered the bait.

Now that he had learned about ecosystems and ecosystem communities, Julian was eager to explore the creek and the park. Summer was the best. He could spend his days on whatever made him curious.



Maya was eager to go to the park, too.

Her most favorite purple ballet shoes were clean and dry. After her feet landed in a mucky puddle beneath her swing, her mom had shared a

useful tip. Be patient. Let the mud dry, and shoes are much easier to clean.

Even the elastic and satin ribbons looked as good as new. Or almost. A few spots or a frayed ribbon didn't matter. Every ballerina knows worn shoes mean you are a real dancer.

Maya's most favorite purple leotard this week had a light purple ruffle around the neck. She had laid it across the back of her chair last night. She had chosen hair ribbons and clips. All that was left to do was choose one of her most favorite baskets to collect flowery weeds.

Mr. Esposito, a park volunteer and Maya's next-door neighbor, said it was okay to pick weeds in the park. No flowers, but flowery weeds were allowed.

Mrs. Schieber, the school librarian and Mac's neighbor on Hennepin Avenue, had a garden full of flowers, and also a few weeds. She had helped Maya research the kinds of weeds she might find in Cayuga Island Park.

Everyone knows what dandelions are. Clover, too. Its blooms reminded Maya of tiny raspberry sno-cones. She liked finding lucky four-leaf clovers. She had discovered two so far! Her mom helped her press them between sheets of waxed paper. She made bookmarks with them. She kept one. The other one she had given to Mrs. Schieber.

When Maya learned about shepherd's purse, she liked the weed's name even more than its flowers. It was safe, too—no prickles, no itches. She decided right then and there to hunt for it in the park.

Maya chose a wicker basket from the stack on the shelf. She noticed Sparky's bowl was empty, so she added some kibble for her cat.

Now she was ready!

Almost.

Maya dashed back to her bedroom. She needed a package of stick-on gems. She opened the long, deep drawer across the bottom of her

dresser. It was crammed with craft supplies. Maya searched for the most perfect jewels to add to a shepherd's purse necklace or a clover crown. The weed flowers were pretty on their own. Still, everything looks better with some sparkle.

Maya waited outside for her friends. She sat on the purple seat of her most favorite swing her dad had built for her. She swung slowly, careful of the patch of dusty dirt beneath the seat. Sparky dozed beside the purple sandbox with the purple-striped awning. Dad had built that, too. The purple collar Maya had made for Sparky glittered in the sun.

Summer was the best.

"Maya!" a voice called out. "Are you ready to go to the park?"

Sparky scampered beneath the bush. Maya turned to find Mac with his fishing net slung across one shoulder and his powder horn across the other. Mac's furry cap with its stripy tail sat on his head. Just like always.



Julian stood beside him. He had fishing gear, too. And his backpack. Maya guessed his tablet was inside. Julian always had his tablet with him. He was curious, and he liked checking facts.

“I’m ready!” Maya jumped from the swing. The sun was shining, and surely weeds were flowering in the park. It really was a most perfect day.



Yoko was ready for another day at the park to begin.

She opened the front door before her friends rang the bell.

“Time to go to the park!” Maya sang. She twirled, and her wicker basket spun right along with her.

The tail on Mac’s cap bobbed. His net wiggled. Something inside his powder horn rustled. “Adventures await!” he declared.

Julian stood behind Mac and peered inside the powder horn. Yoko knew he was curious about what was rattling around in there.

Yoko leaned against the door jamb. Thoughts bounced around her brain.

Three friends at your door on a summer day was like...

Last night Yoko decided she would try comparing one thing to a totally different thing. She got the idea from a mystery book Lacey had loaned her. The author's comparisons made pictures in Yoko's mind. Her favorite one was when the author described the candy burglar's face when he got caught by his younger sister. *It crumpled like a soda can at the side of the road.*

Since Yoko was already excellent at rhyming, she decided she would try making comparisons like that.

Maya practiced dancers' steps. Yoko practiced authors' tricks.

“Ready?” Maya nudged her friend out of her thoughts. “Lacey is meeting us at the park.”

Yoko reached for her sunglasses.

But she was still thinking.



Three friends at your door on a summer day  
was like a triple scoop of ice cream.

*Wait! Yoko's mind flashed.*

*Three friends at your door*

*is like a triple scoop of ice cream*

*on a waffle cone*

*on a hot and sunny summer day.*

Yoko put on her sunglasses. Summer was the best. It was hot and sunny days. It was being with friends. And, she decided, it made her ice-cream-scoop comparison just right.

When she shared it with her friends, they loved it, too.

Book 2  
Chapter Two

# The Alley on the Way to the Park

**L**acey and Pesky cut through the alley on the way to the park. It would take longer, but it was more mysterious. And that meant it was more fun. Lacey would hunt for a mystery on the way to meet her friends.

Pesky hunted, too. He sniffed, his nose close to the ground. He darted from one side of the dusty gravel path to the other.

“Yip!” Pesky yapped. Two stinky garbage cans! A heap of musty leaves! A rubbery tire!

“Yip! Yip!” Everything smelled terrific!

While Pesky snuffled, Lacey observed.

There stood the wooden trellis beside Mrs. Schieber's garden shed. Lacey knew her neighbor had been working in her garden because a wet trowel was drying in the sun near the rolled up hose.

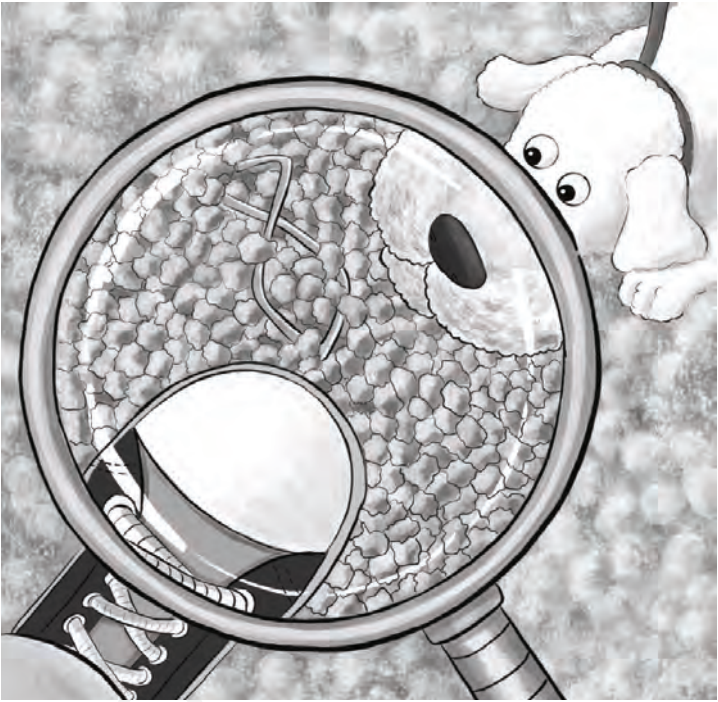
Timmy Winslow's rusty green tricycle rested beneath a trio of tired bushes. Lacey knew that Timmy hadn't ridden it for a while because a maze of cobwebs laced the wheels.

One squirrel chased another around a bale of wire leaning against the trunk of a maple tree. A knotted string of tiny lights lay across a woodpile at the other end of the yard. Were Timmy and his dad planning another project? Were they about to add to Timmy's treehouse?

Lacey sighed. She had seen all these clues before. She had hoped for something new. Something mysterious.

As Lacey continued down the alley, she spotted something shiny. She paused to investigate. With the toe of her sneaker, she

pushed aside some gravel. She pulled out her magnifying glass and leaned over to have a closer look.



The shape reminded her of something. If she turned her head to the side, it almost looked like a fish. Lacey laughed. That, she decided, was just her imagination. What she had discovered wasn't much of anything. It was just a piece of mangled

wire someone had carelessly thrown in the alley. It sure wasn't a clue worth writing in her notebook.

But a good detective doesn't give up. Even though Lacey tucked her magnifying glass back in her pocket, she kept observing on her way to the park.

Pesky kept sniffing. Just before they reached the end of the alley, he spotted a ball hiding behind a pail. It was faded and dusty, and it didn't roll when Pesky nudged it. He picked it up with his teeth. It was spongy! It squeaked!

Pesky shadowed Lacey. His ears perked. Would she let him keep it? He waited for a clue. When Lacey kept walking, Pesky's tail wagged. He could keep the ball!

Up ahead in the park, Lacey spotted Julian and Yoko near the edge of the creek. They were looking at something in the water. Mac and Maya were behind them. Lacey could see Mac's fishing gear, but he wasn't about to catch anything. The pole and net lay on the ground.



That wasn't the clue that made Lacey hurry along.



Maya stood on her tiptoes peering over Yoko's shoulder. She had her hand over her mouth.

That was a bigger clue.

Something was wrong.

Book 2  
Chapter Three

# A Six-Ring Problem

**L**acey heard the squawking as soon as she crossed into the park.

She raced to her friends. Pesky dropped the ball and bounded ahead. Yoko bent to give Pesky a pat, but her eyes stayed on the creek.

The other kids didn't even seem to notice Pesky.

That was the biggest clue that something was wrong.

"What's going on?" Lacey asked.

Julian moved aside to make room for Lacey.

A duck in the water was quacking loudly.

Maya was worried. “It sounds afraid.”

The duck rose slightly in the air before landing back on the water.

“It’s flapping its wings,” said Mac. “But it’s not flying away.”



“Look!” Lacey cried. “It’s caught in a plastic ring!”

One of six clear rings—the kind of rings that form a rectangle to hold together a pack of bottles or cans—circled the mallard’s leg.

Julian pointed. “Another one of the rings is caught in the reeds. The duck’s trapped!”

The mallard was trying to escape, but its webbed foot was wider than its twig-thin leg. And that was keeping the ring from slipping off and setting the duck free.

Each time the mallard flapped its wings, the reeds swayed. But the ring held tight.

Another duck across the creek began quacking, too. It seemed to sense that something was very wrong. Could it see the plastic rings? Was it warning its duck friend about the kids? *Watch out! Too close! Beware!*

The Cayuga Island Kids wouldn’t hurt the duck, of course, but those plastic rings could. The mallard was in a panic. And that was dangerous. The duck could injure itself trying to get free.

Maya shook her hands when the duck's quack grew more frantic. "What can we do?"

Mac looked around. There must be a way they could help!

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Book 2  
Chapter Four

# Net Results

**M**ac set down his powder horn and picked up his fishing net. He climbed onto the biggest of the rocks near the reeds. He was careful to keep as far away from the duck as possible while still being within reach of the reeds holding fast to the plastic rings.

Mac knelt on a patch of stone clear of any moss or slime. He didn't want to slip into the creek. Usually, Mac welcomed a chance to wade in the shallow water along the bank—it was an adventure! But right now he had something more important to do.

Holding the net tightly with both hands, Mac slowly raised his arms over his head. He paused and took a deep breath. Then he swung the net out over the reeds and flicked his wrist.

The net whistled as it came down.

*Whap!* It hit the reeds and flattened them into the creek.

Water splashed. A frog jumped. A dragonfly flew up from the creek bank.



And the plastic ring came free of the reeds.  
The mallard quacked. It flapped once, and then again.

Up into the air and across the narrow creek it flew.

And as it did, the ring slipped from its leg.

The Cayuga Island Kids cheered as the plastic drifted down. It hit the water and rocked on the surface. Gradually it sank out of view.

Maya cheered. “Yay, duck! Yay, Mac!”

Mac jumped off the rock. He was wet from head to sneakers. He straightened his shoulders and tugged on his cap. “What an adventure!”

Julian grabbed Mac’s net before it fell into the creek. Then he clapped his friend on the back. “That was quick thinking.”

Yoko watched as the mallard lowered itself and skimmed the water. It flapped its wings as it came to rest beside the duck across the creek. It quacked, but this time the sound was smooth and rich, as if the duck were relieved. It bobbed



and dipped its head. It ruffled its tail feathers.

“That duck is as happy to be free as a kid on the last day of school,” Yoko declared.

Julian’s eyes crinkled. “That’s funny!”

“And true,” added Mac.

Lacey pointed at the grassy area stretching between the path and the creek. “Have you noticed this before?”

The kids turned. Shreds of paper lay in the grass. A torn plastic bag was snagged on a twig. Bottle caps, candy wrappers, and cigarette butts had been tossed on the ground.

Bits of litter lurked along the creek bank.

And it was in the creek, too. They had watched the plastic rings sink.

Litter might have seemed only sloppy and careless before. But now the Cayuga Island Kids knew that it can be more than messy and thoughtless.

It can be harmful and dangerous.

Julian recalled what he had learned about

ecosystems and communities and how they work together. He untangled the plastic bag and placed it in the bin alongside the path.

Maya put down her basket and picked up a squashed juice box. She was about to toss it in the recycling bin when suddenly two kids on bicycles appeared out of nowhere. They sped down the narrow path, straight toward the group of friends. They were shouting and laughing. They were popping wheelies. And they weren't paying attention to where they were going.



Yoko grabbed Maya's arm and pulled her out of the way just in time. The boy swerved. He spun off the path and rode right over Maya's wicker basket.

"Sorry!" he yelled, slowing down.

But the girl sped up and bumped his back tire. "Not sorry!" she shouted. "What's that dumb basket doing there, anyway?"

She was riding a bright orange bike with mag wheels and high handlebars. She zoomed ahead of the boy and cut sharply in front of him. Her back tire spun out as she rounded the recycling bin. She kicked her legs out as she careened back onto the path. Both of the kids hooted.

As they pedaled off, she threw a plastic bottle into the creek.



Book 2  
Chapter Five

# Bird Brains

“**H**ey!” Lacey called after the girl. But both kids kept right on going. They wheeled around trees and bushes. They narrowly missed a park bench and nearly collided with each other. That only made them laugh louder. Their cackles trailed behind them as they rode out of sight.

Pesky stood beside Lacey and barked.

“Those two sound like chickens at feeding time,” Yoko declared, “and they ride their bikes like bird brains.”

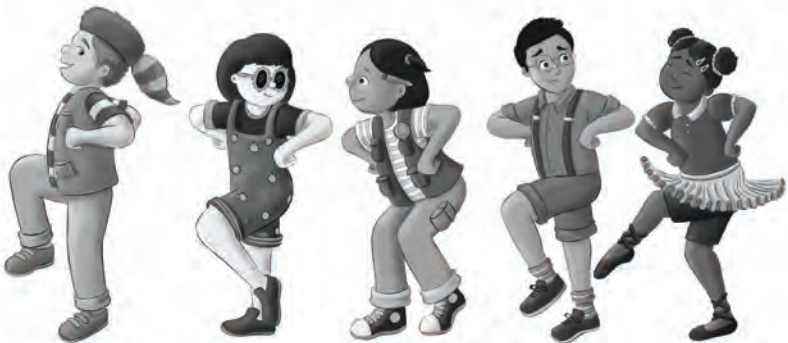
“Only a bird brain would throw a plastic bottle in the creek,” Lacey huffed. “There’s a recycling bin right there!” She took a deep breath.

“When my grandmother’s upset she says, ‘I’m as mad as a wet hen.’ That’s me right now!”

Mac looked at his shirt and pants. “I’m mad and I’m wet.” He tucked his hands under his armpits. He imitated a chicken flapping its wings. He strutted along the path. “Buk, buk-buk. Buk, buk-buk.”

Mac liked making his friends laugh—even if they had good reason to be madder than a barnyard full of wet hens.

Yoko giggled and followed Mac. She pulled Lacey along. “Let’s cackle till our hackles come down.” Even though she was concentrating on comparisons, Yoko still liked to rhyme.



The Cayuga Island Kids strutted like chickens in a barnyard until they were laughing so hard their sides hurt.

Mac sat on the ground and picked up Maya's basket. The handle had come loose on one side. Under a tree a few feet away, Julian found the piece that fastened the handle to the basket. It was cracked.

Lacey's face clouded. "There's a tire mark on the side of your basket!"

Yoko's shoulders drooped. "Oh, Maya. I'm sorry your basket is ruined."

Maya took a close look at her basket. "It's a little bruised. But I can nudge it back into shape." She rubbed at the black mark. "If my mom can get my ballet shoes clean, she'll have no trouble with this." She smiled at her friends. "And I can fix the handle with wire."

"We've solved two problems already today," said Julian. He put an arm around Mac's shoulder. "We saved a duck from being trapped

by trash...”

“Trash that should have been thrown in the recycling bin,” Lacey added.

“And,” Julian continued, “Maya figured out how to keep her basket from ending up in the recycling bin.”

Yoko pumped the air. “Two problems solved, and it isn’t even lunchtime!”

Mac realized he was hungry, even if it wasn’t lunchtime. He reached inside his powder horn and pulled out snack packs of sunflower seeds to share with his friends.

Lacey tapped her notebook with her pencil. “I wonder if we can figure out how to keep litter from being thrown around the park.” Her eyes darkened again. “And out of the creek.”

“Let’s think about that problem,” Maya suggested. She noticed Julian standing at the edge of the creek. He was probably hoping to get back to fishing. She understood. She was hoping to get back to gathering weed flowers.

But then she saw what Julian was looking at. So did the others.

The Cayuga Island Kids gathered beside Julian. Together they fished the bobbing plastic bottle out of the creek and placed it in the recycling bin.





The ducks watched from across the creek. They quacked. They dipped their heads. They wiggled their tail feathers. It was almost as if they were saying thank you.

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Book 2

Chapter Six

# An Idea to Share

**T**he next morning, Lacey and Pesky stood on Yoko's porch. Lacey was about to ring the bell when the door swung open.

Yoko clapped her hands. "You have an idea!"

"How did you know I was at the door?"

Lacey peered at her friend. "And how do you know I have an idea?"

"You are making a detective out of me!" Yoko giggled. "Besides, I heard Pesky bark." She gave the pup a pat. "Your notebook is in your hand instead of your pocket," she added. "Plus, your cheeks are pink. Those are all clues."

Of course Lacey's friends knew that she

kept ideas in her notebook. But, Lacey wondered, what did Yoko mean that her cheeks were pink?

Yoko saw the puzzled look on Lacey's face. "Notebook..." She touched the side of her head, "...ideas." Then Yoko touched her friend's cheeks. "When you have something you can't wait to share, your cheeks turn as pink as the roses in Mrs. Schieber's garden."

Yoko smiled. She had just made a comparison!

"I do have an idea," Lacey confirmed, "for how to get rid of the litter in the park."

Yoko squealed. She grabbed her sunglasses, and the girls and Pesky set off. It was no mystery that they were on their way to find their friends. Lacey would share her idea with all of them at the same time. That was only fair.

In the park, Mr. Esposito was trimming bushes along the creek. Nearby, his golf cart was stacked with garden tools. The girls stopped to tell their neighbor about the mallard getting

caught in the plastic ring. They explained how Mac's quick thinking had set the duck free. They told Mr. Esposito about the plastic rings sinking into the water. And they told him how they fished the plastic bottle out of the creek.

"We never noticed until yesterday how much litter there is along the path." Lacey's shoulders sagged. "And now we know there's more in the creek."



Yoko pushed her sunglasses up higher on her nose. "Litter ruins shared spaces for everyone."

"Including the ducks," Lacey added.

Mr. Esposito reached for a paper bag under one of the bushes. "When people realize the problems litter can cause, they understand the importance of cleaning up after themselves."

Yoko tugged on Lacey's arm. "We are on our way to find our friends. Lacey has an idea that might help!"

"Mac and Julian are fishing. Maya is hunting." Mr. Esposito smiled and pointed. "For weed flowers."

"We'll let you know when Lacey's idea turns into a plan!" Yoko promised.

"I will look forward to that." Mr. Esposito saluted, and the girls sped off to join their friends.

Book 2

Chapter Seven

# A Stack of Facts

**M**ac did not notice Yoko and Lacey hurrying down the path. He had just caught a sunfish and was reeling it in.

Nothing beat the adventure of fishing in the summer. Mac liked the bobbing of the line. He watched the circles widen when it met the water. His heart quickened when the line dipped. That meant he had caught something. He liked the *click-click-click* as he carefully reeled his catch out of the water. Mac knew a good fisherman had to be patient and still. He didn't like that part so much, but he was getting better at it.

Sometimes, though, it wasn't a fish Mac caught. Once he snagged an old sneaker. Another time it was a plastic bag with a soggy coffee cup and a fast-food box inside. He thought he had caught a really big fish that day.

Instead, he emptied the cup and the box and threw them in the recycle bin.

When he did catch a sunfish, Mac looked it over from head to tail before he set it free. He liked the shimmer and the scoop of the scales. He especially liked the gill flap. Most of all, he liked fish eyes. They reminded him of marbles.

Julian examined the fish he caught, too. He measured the length. He measured the width. He estimated how much they weighed. He kept a record of every fish he caught in a chart on his tablet.

Both boys knew it was important to quickly return the sunfish to the creek. Most everyone knows that fish can't survive very long out of water. Julian had read about why.

Fish gills work much like human lungs. The difference is that gills take oxygen from the water to help them breathe. When fish are out of water, they are soon also out of oxygen. Once, Mac and Julian had held their breath for as long as they could. After that, they thought they knew how a fish out of water might feel.



The boys were comparing the sunfish they had caught when Pesky scampered over to



investigate. Pesky liked squirming fish. He liked gushy worms, too. The boys were careful to keep their fluffy friend clear of the hooks at the end of their lines.

While Lacey admired Maya's weed flowers, Yoko leaned over for a closer look at the sunfish. They were flat and shiny and squirmy.

Yoko was squirmy, too.

"Lacey has an idea!" she announced.

"We can always count on Lacey for great ideas," said Julian. That was a fact.

Mac set the sunfish free. "An idea about what?" he asked.

Maya grabbed Pesky's leash before he could follow the fish into the creek.

Yoko was bursting with anticipation. *The litter!* she wanted to shout. But it was Lacey's idea, so she zipped her lips.

"I have an idea about how we might solve the litter problem," said Lacey.

"The litter in the park?" asked Maya.

“And the creek,” added Yoko. She could only zip her lips for so long.

Julian placed the cover on the bucket of worms.

Mac sighed. Their fishing adventure was over for now.

Lacey flipped open her notebook. Her finger moved down a page of squiggles. Her friends waited.

Yoko shifted from one foot to the other. She adjusted her sunglasses. She scratched an itch on her arm. *I'm as wiggly as the worms in Julian's bucket*, she thought.

“First, let's go over what we know. The problem. The facts.” Lacey pulled the pencil from behind her ear. “Then we can share ideas.”

Mac's shoulders drooped. “I don't have an idea.”

“Not yet,” said Maya. “But you will. Remember what Mrs. Schieber says. Put on your thinking cap.”

“Mrs. Schieber also says, ‘More ideas lead to a better idea,’” added Lacey.

Yoko nodded. Mrs. Schieber had a house full of books and a garden full of flowers. She also had a head full of good advice. Yoko stopped wiggling and started thinking.

Julian liked facts. He also liked finding solutions to problems. He would get things started. “We have litter in our park and the creek.”

“That’s a problem and a fact,” said Yoko.

Lacey wrote in big letters at the top of the page.

*Problem: litter in the park and creek*

Maya thought about the plastic bag tangled on the bushes. She remembered the gum wrappers stuck between the flowers. “Litter is ugly,” she said. “It makes our park less beautiful.”

Mac thought about the time he caught the sneaker, and the other time he caught the fast-food boxes instead of fish. “Litter clogs up the creek,” he said.

“Litter is dangerous to the ducks,” added Yoko. She was thinking of yesterday.

“It’s harmful to many living things in the creek, and in the park.” Julian was thinking of the big picture.

Yoko looked at Lacey’s list. “That’s a stack of facts,” she declared.

The friends grew silent. Lacey knew that was a clue. They were ready to share ideas.

But first, she had one more fact to add.

Book 2  
Chapter Eight

# The Pesky Plan

**L**acey read the list aloud. She had placed an exclamation point after the last fact she had added because exclamation points show emotion. She read that fact a little louder. With oomph.

Problem: litter in the park and creek

Facts:

Bottles, bags, and other trash thrown in the creek and along the park path.

Litter makes our park less beautiful.

Litter clogs the creek.

Litter is dangerous to creek life.

Litter is dangerous to park life.

*There are trash and recycling bins in the park,  
BUT some people are not using them!*

“Litter in the park and creek is a big problem.”  
Maya’s voice was quiet. “Can we solve it?”

Max slumped. “We’re just five kids.”

“We can try,” said Julian.

Yoko shoved her hands in her pockets. “We don’t litter, and that’s good.” She paused. “But the litter problem in Cayuga Island Park is bigger than the five of us.”

“Making a difference can catch on. One person becomes two and two becomes four,” said Julian. “Pretty soon one becomes too many to count.”

Mac stood a little taller. He hadn’t thought of it that way. “We’re five strong already,” he said.

Yoko wiggled. “Let’s share ideas.”

“Lacey, you go first,” Mac suggested. He needed a little more time to think of an idea.

“I kept wondering,” Lacey began. “Why don’t people use the trash and recycling bins? They are right there along the path.” She looked toward

the bins. “I thought and thought about that. And then, when I was training Pesky, it came to me.”

*What did training Pesky have to do with getting people to recycle?* Mac wondered.



“Maybe people aren’t using the bins because they aren’t paying attention to them,” Lacey continued. “When I train Pesky, he pays attention better if I make it fun. After doing something a bunch of times, it becomes a habit.”

“If recycling in the park is fun, people will do it.” Julian said slowly. He snapped his fingers. “And if they keep on doing it, recycling will become a habit.”

“A good habit!” exclaimed Maya.

“So we should make recycling in the park like a game?” asked Mac.

“Sure. That would work,” said Lacey. “A game everyone would enjoy.”

Mac felt his cheeks grow warm. He had come up with an idea without even realizing it!

Yoko’s eyebrows flew above her sunglasses. She recycled because it was the right thing to do for the environment. Could it also be fun?

“Maybe we could make the game into a contest,” suggested Maya. “We could include facts about litter to get people thinking.”

Julian liked that.

Yoko recalled what Mr. Esposito had said. “When the contest is over, people might not go back to littering if they learn about the harm it can do,” she said.

“We need a prize,” said Mac. He had never heard of a contest that didn’t have prizes.

“I could make a prize,” offered Maya.

“We also need rules,” said Julian. He had never heard of a contest that didn’t have rules.



Lacey giggled. “First we need to figure out what the contest is going to be.”

“But we have a plan, thanks to Pesky!” Maya clapped her hands.

Pesky ran in circles around her and then sat tall.

The kids laughed. Pesky knew that if he sat tall when Lacey said his name and clapped, he would get a treat.

Lacey had made it fun for Pesky. And now it was a habit.

The Cayuga Island Kids would make it fun to recycle in the park.

But first they had another problem to solve. They needed a treat for Pesky.

Book 2

Chapter Nine

# Nurdles

**T**he kids knew that turning a plan into action takes more than just a good idea. It takes gathering information, brainstorming, and solving problems.

They got busy. They would make this happen.

First the kids visited the library. They looked up pollution of public waters—oceans, lakes, and rivers.

They checked more than one book. Julian also searched on his tablet. The kids wanted to be sure the information was factual and up to date.

They read about recycling, too.

Much of the litter in the park and creek was plastic.



Yoko learned that birds and fish often mistake plastic for food. “When animals eat bits of soda bottles, plastic bags, and stir sticks,” she explained, “it ends up in the food humans eat.”

Julian enlarged a photograph on his tablet. “I didn’t know that herring fish eggs look like nurdles.”

Mac looked over Julian’s shoulder. “I didn’t know that a nurdle is a small piece of plastic.”

“I didn’t know that most of the plastic we use is made of nurdles,” said Lacey.

“I like the way the word *nurdles* sounds,” said Maya. “But I don’t like that birds and fish eat bits of plastic.”

“Blahk!” said Yoko.

Mac’s mouth soured. A plastic pellet wouldn’t taste good, or feel good in his stomach, and he was much bigger than a fish or a bird. Well, he was bigger than most birds. He wasn’t bigger than an ostrich. Or an emu. Mac was thinking about big birds when Maya caught his attention.

She was pointing to a page in the book in front of her. “Of the 8.8 million tons of plastic that enter the oceans each year, about half comes from rivers,” she read.

“The creek in our park is part of the Niagara River, and that leads right to Niagara Falls,” said Julian.

“Nobody would want to pollute one of the natural wonders of the world!” cried Yoko.

“Especially one that’s a few miles from where they live,” added Lacey. She wrote down the title, author, and page number of the book in case they needed to check it again.

The more they learned, the more determined the kids became. They would get their community thinking. Once people understood, they would keep their park—and other places—free of litter.

Finally, the kids gathered in the Discussion Den in the back corner of the library. It was time to figure out the contest.

“People could make colorful signs reminding everyone to recycle, reuse, and reduce,” suggested Maya.

Lacey nodded. “We could ask Mr. Esposito for permission to post the signs around the park. Everyone could vote for their favorite one. The person whose sign gets the most votes wins.”

“What happens to the signs once the contest is over?” asked Yoko. “We don’t want to add to

the litter.”

“We could advertise a clean-up day at the park on the neighborhood website instead,” suggested Julian.

“Everyone who pitches in could be entered to win a reusable water bottle.” Maya imagined the most perfect purple water bottle. Who wouldn’t want to win that?

“The winner could be interviewed on the radio or TV.” Lacey imagined being interviewed about why recycling is important. But of course she couldn’t win her own contest. Maybe she would write a letter to the editor instead.

“I could ask Miss Lynne if she’d like to help,” Maya volunteered. Miss Lynne was her neighbor and a Communications professor at the college. She taught students all about getting the word out.

Mac liked all of his friends’ ideas. But there were two things they still needed to figure out.

“How can we make recycling fun?” he wondered aloud. “And how can we make it a habit?”



ARC  
NOT FOR SALE

Book 2  
Chapter Ten

# Planning the Contest

**T**he next morning the kids gathered at Yoko's house. Julian was the first to arrive. Next came Lacey and Pesky. Maya was close behind.

When Mac arrived, they would begin brainstorming.

Yoko placed a dish—a glass dish—of fish-shaped crackers in the center of the table. She had chosen the snack especially for Julian and Mac because they loved to fish in the creek.

“I hope there are no nurdles in there,” joked Julian.



Mac hurried into the kitchen as Yoko set a tall pitcher of water and five glasses on the table. No bottled water.

“I couldn’t find my hat!” Mac slid into the open seat.

“It’s on your head.” Maya’s dimples deepened. Mac rolled his eyes, but he grinned.

Yoko poured a glass of water for each of them. “My dad found this ceramic pitcher in the back of the cupboard. These glasses and this dish are made from recycled glass.” She held her arms wide. “This is a no-plastic meeting!”

Yoko’s friends waited. They could tell she had more to say.

“We could plan a no-plastic-for-a-day-contest!” Yoko explained. “Everyone who enters the contest tells how they kept their day plastic-free.”

Maya held up her glass. “I like that!”

“Plastic is found in plenty of things,” Julian reminded his friends. “There’s plastic in my tablet.

There's even plastic in your hoodie." He pointed to the jacket hanging on a hook at the door.

Mac looked around the kitchen. "The blender is made of plastic. So is the dish detergent bottle."

The kids noticed picture frames, lamps, chairs, and phones.

Maya wiggled her toes. "My flip-flops are made of plastic."

Yoko slid down in her chair. "My idea is about as good as cold French fries."

Lacey disagreed. "Your idea just needs more thought."

"Maybe we plan a no-*single-use-plastic-for-a-day* contest," Julian offered.

Yoko sat up. She liked that. "No straws, no plastic forks or spoons, and no single-use bottles of juice or water."

"That will get people thinking," said Maya.

"And it would be a challenge," added Yoko, "like trying not to step on the lines on the sidewalk."

“That *is* a challenge,” agreed Mac. So was finding the pack of fruity gum he had stashed in his powder horn. He felt around and finally found it wedged in the tip. He pulled it out and offered a piece to each of his friends.

Maya bounced in her chair. “Yesterday I read that there’s plastic in chewing gum. No gum on no-single-use-plastic day!”

Mac’s brow wrinkled. *Plastic in gum?* He dropped the pack into his powder horn. He reached for a handful of cheesy fish crackers instead.

“We have our contest!” Lacey high-fived Yoko.

“Our community will learn while completing a challenge for a prize,” said Julian. “Challenges are always fun!”

“So is winning a prize,” said Mac.

“I’ll work on the title,” Lacey volunteered. “It will be short and snappy and make people curious.”

“Every good contest has a slogan. I’ll work on that,” offered Yoko. Ideas were already popping into her mind.

Maya raised her hand. "I'll work on the prize."

Julian hunched over his tablet. "I'll make a list of rules." *Five would be good*, he thought.

Around the table, the kids set off on their tasks.

Julian began typing.

1. EXPLAIN HOW YOU CELEBRATED...

Julian would fill in the title of the contest once Lacey figured it out.

2. WRITE YOUR NAME AND PHONE  
NUMBER ON YOUR ENTRY.

3. GIVE YOUR ENTRY TO MR. ESPOSITO,  
CAYUGA ISLAND PARK VOLUNTEER

Julian made a note to talk to Mr. Esposito.

4. ENTRIES DUE BY 6:00 P.M. ON AUGUST 1.

Julian looked at the list. It was clear and simple. It covered the details. Maybe four rules were enough.



Meanwhile, Lacey jotted in her notebook.

She wrote. She crossed out. She turned the page. She wrote and crossed out some more. She flipped back to the previous page and read it again.

*A good title sparks interest*, she thought. Something was missing.

Scribble, scratch, scritch, scribble.

Across from Lacey, Maya doodled designs for the most perfect reusable water bottle. *What material should it be?* she wondered. Plastic didn't seem right. Stainless steel? Aluminum? *What color would be best?* Green for the environment? Light green or dark green? *Where would they get the bottle? Or the money to buy it?* Maya didn't have enough allowance saved up for that. *Would Mom take her to the craft store to shop for stickers to decorate it?* Suddenly, Maya laughed. She imagined her mom telling her to "shop" in her craft drawer. It was brimming with stickers, and more!



Yoko's brain was bubbling. An idea would pop up. She'd think it was great! For about two seconds. Then she would decide that it wasn't.

*Contest slogans can be catchy, she thought. But the message must be clear.*

*Make a change.*

*Be the change.*

*Make a difference.*

*Recycling matters. Make it happen.*

*Make a change. Make a difference. Make it happen.*

Yoko sighed. She was as stuck as oatmeal left in a bowl.

That comparison made her smile.

And it gave her an idea.

The contest slogan could be a catchy comparison.

Now she just needed to come up with one.

Yoko's legs swung beneath her chair.



Mac rested his head on his hand. He wondered if there would be time to go fishing later—after they were done working on the contest, of course.

Mac watched his friends. They were doodling, scribbling, and dreaming. Julian was typing-swiping-reading. Yoko's legs were swinging. Maya laughed to herself.

Mac's friends had figured out the fun part. They would have a contest.

They had figured out the *get people thinking* part. No single-use plastic for a day.

But, Mac thought, *the contest was only for one day.*

They needed to figure out the *make recycling a habit* part.

And what about the *cleaning up the park and creek* part? Wasn't that how all this had started?

Mac tugged on the tail of his coonskin cap. He smoothed the fur edges just above his ears. He imagined his hat was a thinking cap. He told his brain to get busy.



Book 2  
Chapter Eleven

# Snacking on Ideas

**W**hile the Cayuga Island Kids worked, Pesky snuffled in his sleep at their feet. Mac tugged on his coonskin hat/ thinking cap until it met his eyebrows.

No ideas came to him.

*Thinking is hard work*, he thought. Mac reached for the bowl of cheese crackers. In the middle of the fistful, he spotted a smiley fish. *Lucky!* He decided to save that one for last.

Mac looked at the crackers. They were a fun color and shape. And it was fun discovering a smiley fish in a handful of plain fish. No wonder when he went grocery shopping with his dad, Mac reached for a bag of these crackers instead

of others. Cheesy fish crackers didn't taste any better than other cheesy crackers, but they were more fun.



Mac thought about that as he passed the bowl to Lacey. It gave him an idea.

If the recycling bin were a fun color or shape, people would notice. They would be more likely to toss their recyclables there instead of along the path or in the creek.

Mac twirled the tail on his coonskin hat/thinking cap. He ate one cracker, then two, and then another. He ate them all except the smiley one.

Mac's first idea led to another idea. He was pretty sure it was a good idea, too. He would use the smiley fish cracker to explain it to his friends.

Mac cleared his throat. But before he said a word, the doorbell rang.

Pesky scrambled to his feet and barked his way to the door. Yoko looked through the side window. “It’s Vivian Ventrano with my dad’s dry cleaning,” she announced.



Yoko opened the door and greeted the teen in the green-striped uniform. In exchange for a reusable garment bag filled with clean shirts on hangers, Yoko handed Vivian a lumpy canvas bag. It was stuffed with shirts that needed to be washed and pressed. She also handed Vivian a triangular cardboard box especially made to hold a stack of wire hangers.

“Wait!” Yoko hurried to the kitchen and pulled a small brown bag from the drawer. She scooped up some fish crackers and piled them in. Back at the door, she offered the bag to Vivian. “Here are some crackers to snack on.”

“Thank you!” Vivian peeked inside the bag. “These are my cousin’s favorite. He’s riding along with me today.” She patted Pesky before trotting back to the green van with Verde Dry Cleaners and a picture of Earth on the side. Yoko waved and Vivian *beep-beep-beeped*.

“I like that box for the hangers,” said Maya.

“When my dad gets a clean shirt from the closet, he puts the hanger in the box. When it’s full, we return them,” explained Yoko. “Verde Dry Cleaners is green. They use safer cleaning solutions. They also reuse hangers and recycle damaged ones.”

“We collected hangers when we made mobiles with the preschoolers at summer camp,” Maya recalled. “They got all tangled up. We could have used boxes like that.”

“Last year our class made Valentine’s Day wreaths from hangers for the nursing home,” said Lacey. “They were easy to shape. But you’re right. They got tangled when we were collecting them.”

“My dad likes to have a few wire hangers around for fishing something out of a hard-to-reach spot or for unclogging a drain.” Julian laughed. “Once, a hanger made him a hero. He used it to unlock my uncle’s vintage car door when he left the keys inside.”

Mac couldn't wait any longer. He sprang from his chair, which got Pesky scrambling all over again. "I have an idea!"

His friends turned toward him.

"For using a hanger?" asked Julian.

Before Mac could answer, the doorbell rang again.

"Hold on!" Yoko hurried to the door.

Mac groaned. He rubbed his cheeks so hard his hat nearly fell off.

Yoko peeked through the window. "Hey, guys." Her voice was whisper low. "You won't believe who's at the door."

Book 2  
Chapter Twelve

# Ring...Ring...Ding

**B**y the time Yoko swung the door open, all of her friends were crowded behind her. Even Pesky, who had wiggled between Lacey's legs.

Standing on the porch with an empty hanger box was the boy from the park the other day.

The boy on the bike.

The boy who had said, "Sorry!" about Maya's trampled basket, but then laughed.

The boy whose friend had snarled, "Not sorry!" and then threw the plastic bottle into the creek.

He stared at the Cayuga Island Kids. They stared back. His cheeks flamed. He coughed.



“Um,” he mumbled, “Vivian forgot to give you this.” He thrust the box toward Yoko and hopped off the porch, taking two steps at a time.

Vivian waved out the open window as she *beep-beep-beeped* her way down the street for the second time.

Yoko turned. Her eyes were as big as sandwich cookies. “Vivian’s so friendly! That mean kid is her cousin?”



Julian crossed his arms. “His friend is even meaner.”

“Every time I think about her throwing that plastic bottle in the creek...” Lacey’s face reddened.

“Our contest is going to make people think about recycling.” Maya was sure of it.

“I have an idea!” Mac reminded his friends. He had waited so long. He had been patient. Now was the time! Besides, the smiley cracker was going to crumble into cheddar dust if he held it in his fist much longer.

“Let’s hear it.” Julian put his arm around his friend’s shoulders and the kids walked back to the kitchen.

Mac opened his hand and held out the smiley fish cracker. “This gave me an idea.”

Julian peered into his friend’s palm. “A cracker?”

“A fish cracker,” amended Lacey. That detail might be a clue.

“A smiley fish cracker!” Maya noticed things like that.

“I’m as curious as...” Yoko paused. “...Sparky chasing a laser pointer.” The comparison tickled Yoko. She was as pleased as...

She’d think about that later. Right now she would focus on Mac. She’d be as focused as...a laser pointer! Yoko giggled, and then she cleared her throat. Mac had placed the smiley fish cracker in the center of the table. Yoko leaned on the palm of her hand and zeroed in.

“So,” Mac began.

Just then the doorbell rang again.

“Hold on!” Yoko jumped up and ran to the door.

*Not again!* Mac put his head down on the table.

Julian’s tablet dinged as the doorbell chimed again.

“Oops.” Julian stood. “That’s my reminder. I have a dentist appointment.”

“But, but...!” Mac stammered.

Yoko returned to the kitchen. She held up an envelope with Verde Dry Cleaners printed in the left-hand corner. She read what was written on the back.

“I’m sorry about that basket. I can fix it.”

Yoko turned the envelope sideways and kept reading.

“I can make the handle as good as new. With a wire hanger.”

She turned the envelope again and read, “Signed, Vincent.”

Maya smiled. “He’s right. That would work.”

Book 2

Chapter Thirteen

# Brains Storming

**L**acey picked up the fish cracker and handed it to Mac. “Let’s meet in the park later,” she suggested. “We can hear Mac’s idea and keep working on the contest.”

Mac groaned. His thinking cap had worked! He remembered a word he had learned during pair and share in Mrs. Schieber’s library class. *Stupendous*. At first, it sounded a little like *stupid*, but he could tell by the way Mrs. Schieber used it, that it meant the opposite. He liked the bigger, better, happier word right away.

His idea was stupendous! But now he had to wait to share it. *Stink bug!*

Maybe he could pair and share with Julian. Then, while Julian was in the dentist's chair, he could think about Mac's idea instead of the whirring tool in his mouth.

No, Mac decided. He would share his idea with all of his friends at the same time. It was only fair. Even if it felt unfair that he had to wait.

In the meantime, Maya would keep thinking about designs for the water bottle. She planned to talk to her mom, too. "We will have the most perfect prize for our contest," she promised.

Yoko promised to keep thinking about a slogan. "It's up there somewhere in my brain, like a lost sock in the dryer!" She tugged on her bangs and her sunglasses slipped down.

On the walk home, Lacey pondered the name of the contest. Nothing seemed just right.

*Why is this so hard?* she wondered.

Suddenly, it came to her. She needed more information.

Lacey knew the name of the contest should

connect to the slogan. Yoko was working on that.

If she needed more information, so did Yoko. The contest name would help.

More information would also help Maya choose a design for the water bottle.

Finally, Lacey's thoughts landed on Mac. They all needed to know what a smiley fish cracker had to do with the contest.

Lacey felt as if she was going in circles when she heard a bell ringing. She looked up.

"Hello!" Mrs. Schieber was pedaling toward her. A burst of flowers climbed up one side of her bright yellow bike helmet. It reminded Lacey of her neighbor's garden.

Mrs. Schieber pulled over to the curb. She reached for her water bottle, and Lacey noticed it was metal. A few days ago she probably wouldn't have paid attention to that. But she did now, after what happened in the park, and after learning about single-use plastics.

Mrs. Schieber took a sip from the bottle.

“You have thoughts brewing,” she said.

Lacey laughed. Mrs. Schieber was one of those teachers who knew about—and cared about—each of her students. She was that kind of neighbor, too.

“I was thinking about a contest my friends and I are planning, and also about how your water bottle is reusable.”

It was Mrs. Schieber’s turn to laugh. She pulled her bike off the street and parked it. She unbuckled her helmet and sat on the grass. Pesky romped around Mrs. Schieber until she was settled. Then he dove into her lap and got settled himself.

“Details.” Mrs. Schieber patted the ground.

Lacey sat beside her. She told Mrs. Schieber all about the past few days. She told her about the ducks, the plastic bottle, and the litter in the park. Finally, she explained the idea for a contest that would get the Cayuga Island community thinking about recycling.



When Lacey was finished, Mrs. Schieber sat for a moment, thinking.

“Organizing a community contest is a big job,” she said. “But I know you and your friends can do it.” Her eyes were bright. “How can I help?”

“We brainstormed ideas,” Lacey began.

“Excellent!” Mrs. Schieber took another sip of water. “Brainstorming is the first step in teamwork.”



“We agreed on a plan. We divided up the tasks,” Lacey continued. “Each of us is working on a part of the contest.” Lacey sighed. “But we seem stuck.”

“Splitting up the work on a project makes sense.” Mrs. Schieber replaced the cap on her water bottle. “But working together keeps your brains storming.”

*Brains storming.* Lacey liked the sound of that.

“Teamwork makes the dream work,” Mrs. Schieber patted Lacey’s shoulder. “I read that somewhere, and I never forgot it.”

*Teamwork, Lacey thought. Five brains storming are better than one.*

She reached for her notebook.

Mrs. Schieber stood and stretched. She handed Pesky’s leash to Lacey. “Getting stuck is a sign. Come together. Consider the big picture.” She pointed to the four-way stop at the corner. “Look all ways. Maybe look in a new direction.”

Lacey thought for a moment. “It’s like solving a mystery,” she said.

“Exactly!” Mrs. Schieber swung her leg over the bike and snapped her helmet strap in place. “Get your brains storming, and you’ll be ready to pedal off again!” She waved and rode down the street.

Lacey opened her notebook. The Cayuga Island Kids would look at the big picture. Maybe they would look in a new direction.

Book 2  
Chapter Fourteen

# Sorry, Not Sorry, Very Sorry

**A**s soon as she got home, Maya explained the contest and her most favorite idea for a prize to her mom. Well, first she gave Sparky a treat. She stroked the cat from her ears to her fluffy tail. Then she talked to her mom.

Maya's mom agreed to take her to the store the next day to shop for a reusable water bottle. Even better, she offered to "donate to the cause." That meant she would pay for the bottle!

But just as Maya expected, her mom declared, "No new craft supplies." She pointed to Maya's dresser.



Maya poked through piles of possibilities in the long, wide drawer.

Stacks of stickers.

Packets of gems.

Glitter.

She dug deeper.

Holiday stamps.

Markers.

Pots of puffy paint.

Maya sighed. The decorating-the-bottle part of the promise she had made to her friends might be a challenge.

It wasn't because she didn't have enough supplies.

And it wasn't because she didn't know *how* to decorate the bottle. The problem was she couldn't decide *what* to use.

Which beads? Which ribbons? Which words fit best with the contest?

Across the room, the wind chime danced in the window.

The wind chime Maya had made it in art class from wire hangers.

Maya read the note again from sorry—not sorry—very sorry Vincent.

She fingered the crushed basket.

Vincent had offered to fix it with a wire hanger.

*Maybe, thought Maya, sorry—not sorry—very sorry Vincent might be willing to do more than fix her basket.*

Maybe, just maybe, Vincent could help with the contest.

Vincent's uncle owned Verde Dry Cleaners.

Dry cleaners have plenty of wire hangers.

And there are plenty of things you can do with wire hangers.

Maybe instead of one prize, everyone who entered the contest could receive something that would remind them to recycle.

Something made from recycled hangers would be perfect.

Maybe Vincent could help with that.

And maybe, just maybe, Maya could be the one to convince him to help.

Maya lifted the basket from her craft table. It was a good thing she hadn't had a chance to fix it herself.

Maya tucked the note from Vincent into the basket and set off.

ARC  
NOT FOR SALE

Book 2

Chapter Fifteen

# Blueberries

**Y**oko reached into the refrigerator for a handful of blueberries. She held them in her palm. They were plump and cold. As she rinsed them, she decided they were more purple than blue.

*Purpleberries.* Yoko smiled. If blueberries were called purpleberries, they would be Maya's most favorite fruit.

*Plumpberries.* That would be a yummy name, too.

Yoko chose the plumpest berry. It was juicy and tart.

*Blueberries.* Yoko decided that was a good



name after all. Blueberries taste like a burst of summer sky.

The notion came to Yoko as swiftly as a shooting star.

*If only a slogan for the contest would come as easily*, Yoko thought.

She popped another berry in her mouth.

And another thought popped into her head.

Yoko needed a *something* to connect to their contest.

If she figured that out, Yoko was certain she could come up with a slogan.

She closed her eyes. And there it was.

The recycling bin in the park!

That was an obvious *something* to connect to the contest.

But the recycling bin had been in the park for a long time. It was rusty and fusty. And, with all the litter in the park, it was obvious that people weren't always using the recycling bin. Yoko knew it would not be the best *something* to

connect to the contest slogan.

A lone blueberry remained in Yoko's hand. It reminded her of Mac and the cheesy fish cracker. What was his idea? He had been itching to share.

Now Yoko was itching to hear. Mac's idea might be the *something* she needed. Yoko felt as itchy as... *a hiker in a swarm of mosquitoes.*

Yoko shooed that image out of her mind. It made her feel itchy in a twitchy kind of way.

Yoko tucked her sunglasses into the hair on top of her head. She was ready to meet up with her friends. But first, she reached back into the refrigerator for one more handful of summer sky.



Book 2  
Chapter Sixteen

# Fishy Idea

**M**ac waited in front of the recycling bin as Maya hurried up the path. *Finally!* All of his friends were here.

Mac didn't waste any time. He wanted to share his idea before there were any more interruptions.

"We decided on a contest to get people thinking about recycling. We're working on making it fun. But," Mac shrugged his shoulders, "we haven't figured out the how-to-make-it-a-habit part."

"Or the slogan," added Yoko.

"Or the name of the contest," said Lacey.  
"We are stuck."

Mac pulled the cracker from his pocket. A bit of the fish's tail had broken off, but its smile was still there. "What happens when you find a smiley fish in a bowlful of these crackers?"

"It makes *me* smile," said Yoko.

Maya nodded. "Sometimes I leave it in the bowl for someone else to find."

"I wonder how many more there are in the bowl," said Julian.

"I never thought about that." Lacey tilted her head. "Now I'm wondering how many there are in a bag."

"Do you think every bag has the same number of smiley fish?" Julian knew how to find out. He reached into his backpack for his tablet.

But when he noticed that Mac was fidgety, his hands fell to his side. "Anyhow," he said, "what's your idea, Mac?"

"If we make this fun to look at, people will notice it." Mac patted the side of the recycling bin, and it made a hollow sound.

“If they notice it, maybe they’ll use it.” Yoko hoped so, anyway.

“And,” added Lacey, “the more they use the bin, the more recycling will become a habit.”

Mac could tell his friends liked his idea. But they needed a plan. “We have to come up with a contest for making the bin fun to look at,” he said.

Lacey opened her notebook. She hoped they weren’t going to get stuck again.

There were Mrs. Schieber’s words. *Look all ways. Maybe look in a new direction.*

“I wonder,” she said slowly, “if a contest is the best plan.” Lacey was about to explain when she noticed Maya staring at the recycling bin. She was cradling her limp basket. That made sense because the handle was still broken. But Maya wasn’t twirling or dancing or practicing a curtsy. She was standing perfectly still. That didn’t make sense at all.

“Maya?” said Lacey. “What are you thinking?”



Julian typed the words FUN RECYCLING BINS and FISH in the search bar on his tablet. In seconds, colorful images flooded the screen.

The friends huddled as Julian swiped through pages of pictures of fishy recycling bins.

Some were placed in offices. Some were made for classrooms. One was displayed behind ropes in an art gallery!

Suddenly, Maya gasped. She pointed to an image.

It was a big fish. Tall and wide and made of wire. It was on a beach.

And it was full of plastic bottles.

It was perfect!

Lacey whooped. The Cayuga Island Kids had looked in a new direction.

But would teamwork make their dream work?

They could try!

Book 2

Chapter Seventeen

# Community Project

**T**he Cayuga Island Kids sat under a tree near the creek. Their brains were storming.

“Mr. Esposito could announce the project in the community newsletter,” Lacey began.

“Miss Lynne might help us contact the radio and TV stations,” said Maya.

“My sister can text her friends,” said Mac.  
“Sookie has tons of friends.”

Lacey nodded as she wrote. Her eyes shone.

“Hold on!” Julian wiped his forehead. “First we need to figure out what materials we need.”



He enlarged the photo on his tablet.

“And,” said Mac, “who can help us.” The gigantic wire fish would get everyone’s attention. But it would take an army of volunteers to build it. “This is way harder than any Scout project. That fish is as big as a whale.” The smiley fish cracker in Mac’s hand crumbled a little more.

“That’s what makes it so fun!” Yoko declared. But her shoulders drooped. Mac was right.

Julian looked from one friend to another. “We won’t know if we can do it if we don’t try.”

Mac high-fived with Julian. He was ready. He pointed to Lacey’s list. “Besides a bunch of metal, we need tools and paint and brushes.”

“My dad can help with that,” Maya said brightly. “And here comes someone else who might be able to help us.”

Riding toward them on the path was Vincent.

He jumped off his bike before it stopped rolling.

Lacey noticed a wire hanger dangling from the handlebars. It was a clue, but there was no mystery. Vincent had offered to fix Maya's broken basket, and she had brought it to the park.

But why did Maya think Vincent might help with the community project? That was a mystery, and Lacey didn't have a clue.

Maya seemed to read Lacey's mind. "I told Vincent about our contest."

Vincent nodded.

"I wondered if we could use hangers to make something for everyone who enters the contest," Maya continued.

"Like a party favor," said Mac.

"It would be a reminder to recycle." Maya's eyes sparkled. "I asked Vincent if he had any ideas."

Vincent nodded again.

"Right away, he pulled out a hanger and straightened it. Then he bent it into a shape," Maya explained. "When I saw what he made, I

wanted you to see it. So I invited him to meet us here.”

She turned toward Vincent. “Would you show them?”

Vincent pulled not one, but a trio of metal shapes from his back pocket. The first looked like a cat.

Mac pointed to the second one. “Is that a... chicken?”

Finally, Vincent spoke. “Yes, it *is* a chicken!” He bounced on his toes. He was glad it was obvious.

A grin spread across Julian’s face.

Lacey started laughing.

Then Maya.

Then Yoko. Laughing with her friends was like playing Frisbee. First one friend caught it then another, then another.

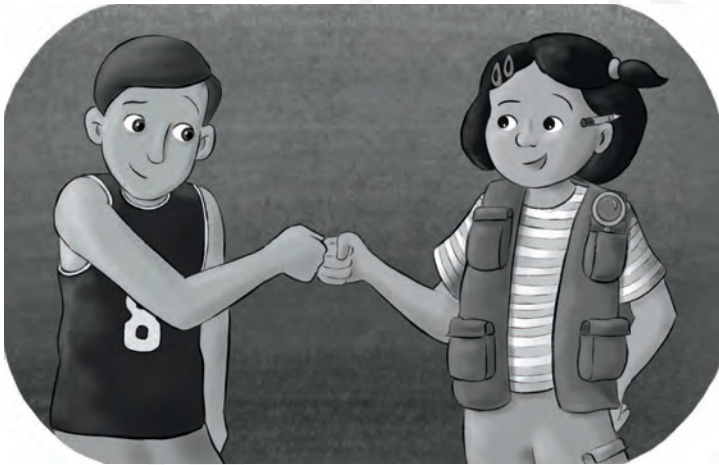
Mac tucked his hands under his armpits. He strutted down the path. He cackled like a chicken. “Buk, buk-buk. Buk, buk-buk.”

His friends followed, cackling and laughing.

Vincent's mouth fell open, and that made the Cayuga Island Kids laugh even harder.

"Sorry," said Julian. "We're not laughing at you."

"Not sorry," said Lacey. A giggle bubbled up. She was kidding, of course. She extended her hand and they fist-bumped.



"Busted," said Vincent, and then he was laughing, too.

"What's that one?" asked Mac, pointing to the third metal shape.

When Vincent showed him, Mac's eyebrows shot up. "It looks like a smiley fish!"

Vincent nodded. "We could make a fish for everyone who enters the contest."

Maya noticed he said *we*.

"Instead of using the hangers to make a school of small fish, do you think we can use them to make one big fish?" she asked.

The look on Vincent's face started the kids laughing all over again.

Then they explained how the contest had turned into a community project.



While they brainstormed ideas for the community project, Vincent repaired Maya's basket.

Maya plucked a handful of clover. She didn't check to see if any of it had four leaves. It didn't

matter. She was feeling very lucky already.

Ideas fired like sparklers in Yoko's head. She finally had a special *something* to connect to the slogan—the big fish recycling bin. The slogan she'd create would be great.

Lacey had taken pages of notes when Julian's tablet dinged for the second time that day. It was his reminder to help his dad with dinner. Tonight it was Julian's turn to set the table and choose the fruit for dessert.

Lacey tucked her notebook in her back pocket. She couldn't wait to get home and get started on a name for the community project.

Mac was eager to go home, too. He was hungry for dinner. But he was also looking forward to Supper Share. Each night everyone in his family shared something they had learned that day. Often, Mac had to think hard about what to say. But not tonight. He would tell his family all about the plans for the Cayuga Island

Park community project. Supper Share would be stupendous!



NOT FOR SALE

Book 2

Chapter Eighteen

# The Big Fish by the Small Creek

**T**he Cayuga Island Kids were very busy over the next few weeks.

Julian and his dad met with the mayor. Julian showed her photos of litter in Cayuga Island Park. He chose a few of the most interesting recycling facts to share. Then Julian explained their idea for the Cayuga Island Park community project. He pulled up the image of the big fish recycling bin. The mayor agreed that it was certain to be noticed. It would help keep the park and creek clean. She shook Julian's hand.



She would provide the sturdy metal needed for the big fish's frame!

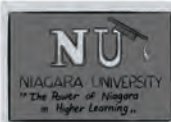
Vincent told his uncle about the community project. Mr. Ventrano offered to donate all the hangers he had intended to recycle. Vivian and Vincent showed the kids a safe and simple way to straighten the hangers. For three days they all worked together in the steamy back room at Verde Dry Cleaners. The hanger wire would form the body of the big fish recycling bin.

Mr. Esposito interviewed the kids about *The Big Fish by the Small Creek Community Project* for the community newsletter. Lacey's name for the project made Cayuga Island residents curious. It got people talking. They would help.

Inside the newsletter, The Como Deli, the public library, Sullivan's Hot Dog Stand, the college, Buzzy's Pizza, the senior citizen center, Verde Dry Cleaners, and the mayor all placed ads to show their support.

Yoko's slogan ran across the top of the page.

I AM JUST ONE PERSON, BUT...  
LIKE THE BIG FISH BY THE SMALL CREEK,  
I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.  
YOU CAN, TOO.



ENTER TO WIN A:  
**Reusable Water Bottle**



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

crafted by Maya, one of the Cayuga Island Kids  
who organized the Big Fish Community Project!



On Julian's raffle announcement, Maya had drawn a border of tiny fish. She also drew a picture of the reusable water bottle she had

crafted. Her friends said it was perfect. A lucky winner would be chosen at the end of the day.

Miss Lynne helped the kids get the word out to the local newspaper and the radio and TV stations. They made phone calls. They sent letters and emails.

A crew from the TV station planned to film the big fish as it was being constructed. A reporter from the newspaper would interview community helpers for a feature story.

Sookie and her friends posted reminders on social media with the help of Miss Lynne's students.

Finally, the day was here!

Yoko took one last look at the Cayuga Island online newsletter before clicking off the family computer. She had planned to print a copy. But then she remembered it takes trees to make paper. She decided to save the newsletter on the computer instead. She could look at it whenever she liked, and it wouldn't get wrinkled or lost.

Yoko's dad was so proud of what the kids had accomplished that he had made a screen shot of the newsletter. He used it as the wallpaper for his work computer.

That was way better than a paper copy!

Yoko skipped down the steps of the front porch. Today she would meet her friends on the sidewalk. She wouldn't wait until they rang the doorbell!

Julian and Mac were coming her way. Mac was wheeling a wagon. It was piled with plastic bottles. His powder horn looked as if it was grinning as it bounced against his chest. Yoko began guessing what was inside.

Book 2  
Chapter Nineteen

# Back in the Alley

**L**acey and Pesky cut through the alley on the way to the park.

While Pesky sniffed, Lacey observed. That's what good detectives do, even on a big day like this.

A hose stretched alongside the garden in Mrs. Schieber's yard. But today, Lacey knew her neighbor was busy in the kitchen instead of the yard. The clue was the whiff of chocolate chip cookies.

Timmy Winslow's rusty green trike was still parked beneath the bushes. But the bale of wire was no longer resting against the trunk of

the maple tree. That was a clue. But there was no mystery. Lacey knew it had been donated to the community project.

Meanwhile, Pesky investigated a knotted length of rope. It lay across a forgotten planter half-filled with rainwater. Pesky yipped. He nudged the rope and it flopped to the ground. He picked it up with his teeth. It was musty! It was stringy!

Pesky shadowed Lacey. His ears perked. Would she let him keep it? He waited for a clue. When Lacey continued walking, Pesky's tail wagged. He could keep the rope!

Lacey studied the path as she neared the end of the alley. When she spotted something shiny, she paused to investigate. Lacey pushed aside some gravel with the toe of her sneaker. She leaned in for a closer look.

There it was. The tangled wire. The one she had spotted a few weeks ago.

It still reminded her of a fish.

Lacey laughed. This was not litter someone had carelessly tossed in the alley after all. It had been carefully shaped into an animal. And, she figured, most likely it had fallen out of someone's pocket.

When Lacey had first noticed it, she had thought it was nothing. Certainly not a clue to write in her notebook. Now she decided it was.

Lacey eyed the yard off the alley. Inside an open garage, she spotted a shelf piled with triangular boxes. Each had an image of Earth on its side.



Propped beside the garage door was a bike. Lacey would know that bike anywhere.

She paused. Her friends and neighbors were already at work on the big fish. She was eager to join them. Pesky darted back and forth across the narrow alley with a piece of rope in his mouth. He seemed excited to get to the park, too.

Lacey thought about how the community project had started with a plastic bottle thrown in the creek. She thought about the heart of Yoko's slogan.

*I am just one person, but I can make a difference.  
You can, too.*

Lacey walked through the yard. Just as she reached the back porch, the girl who owned the bright orange bike with mag wheels and high handlebars came around the corner from the side of the house.



Book 2  
Chapter Twenty

# Making a Difference

**L**acey and Pesky arrived at the park just as Vivian was parking the Verde Dry Cleaners van. Vincent hopped out and waved. A team of neighbors gathered to unload the bundles of straightened hangers.

A reporter hopped out of a car parked behind the dry cleaner's van and approached Julian. Lacey knew he was a reporter because a photographer trailed behind him. And, they both wore shirts with the newspaper's name on the back. Julian was about to be interviewed! When Pesky spotted Julian, he dropped the rope and yipped.

Near the creek, Maya's dad and a team of Cayuga Island residents were constructing the metal frame of the big fish. They were following the plan Miss Lynne's friend from the college had drawn. She stood nearby with a cluster of students. Along with Sookie and her friends, they were taking photos of the activities.

Young children wiggled as they waited in line to have their faces painted by Lacey's grandmother. Mr. Esposito rode by Lacey in his golf cart. He had replaced the tools with a bright red flag. It matched his new hat. Today he was offering neighbors rides around the park to learn more about the trees and flowers planted there.

Maya and her mom sat behind a long table between two park benches. On it they had placed jugs of water and trays of Mrs. Schieber's chocolate chip cookies. Maya's basket, trimmed with weed flowers, sat in the center. She handed each volunteer a ticket for the raffle at the end of the day.

Lacey watched as Vincent's friend approached the table. She filled out a raffle ticket and dropped it in Maya's basket. She chose a cookie, and after taking a bite, she reached for a second one. She stood back and looked up at the big fish before making her way toward Vincent. His face brightened when he saw her. He handed her a length of wire and together they worked it into the side of the fish.

Mac's wagon squeaked as he pulled it across the grass toward Lacey. "Sookie and her friends collected these plastic bottles from around the park. They want to be the first ones to feed the Big Fish." He leaned toward Lacey. "I think they are hoping they get their picture in the newspaper or on Instagram," he whispered.

"The Big Fish by the Small Creek is a hit," Lacey said. "It's fun. People will notice it." She smiled at Mac. "Recycling in Cayuga Island Park is going to become a habit."

Mac looked across the park at all the helpers.

He remembered what Julian had said. *Making a difference can catch on. One person becomes two and two becomes four. Pretty soon one becomes too many to count.*

Suddenly he pointed. "Is that Vincent's friend over there?"

Lacey tucked her hands in her back pockets. "Her name is Alice. I invited her to help build the Big Fish."

"Stupendous idea!" Mac exclaimed.

Lacey smiled. "I wasn't sure what she would say. Or what she would do." Lacey shrugged. "But I asked her anyway. She said yes right away. She jumped on her bike and sped over here."

Mac laughed. "I can picture that."

Yoko caught up with her friends just as she took the last bite of a hot dog. "Our community project is as popular as the state fair!"

Mac and Lacey agreed. And they didn't want to waste another minute, so they joined the mass of volunteers.

Moms and dads. College students and grandparents. Sisters, brothers, and cousins. Throughout the day, neighbors of all sizes and ages gathered to help. They were a community. Julian took photos with his tablet. He would label the collection The Big Fish Ecosystem.



Piece by piece, sturdy metal strips were bolted together to form the body of The Big

Fish by the Small Creek. It was tall and long. It had a wide, smiley mouth. Mac worked on that part. It would welcome plastic bottles and other recyclables. Its flippy tail was hinged so it would be easy to empty. Julian had measured it for the latch. It fit snug and tight.

Maya had threaded together rows of giant sparkly beads. Her father held her up and she placed them on the Big Fish exactly where gills would be.

By the time the mayor arrived, Mrs. Schieber's cookies and the piles of hot dogs donated by Sullivan's were gone. The camera crew from the TV station was filming the last of the wire being attached to the frame of the Big Fish.

The mayor shook hands with volunteers as she made her way to the edge of the creek. She stepped onto a smooth, dry rock clear of any moss. Mac was pretty sure it was the same rock he had climbed on to save the mallard. Across the creek several ducks gathered, as if they, too,

were pleased with the results of the community project.

The crowd quieted. The mayor was about to begin when a fish jumped into the air and then just as quickly returned to the creek. Laughter rippled and someone shouted, "Perfect!"

The mayor thanked the community volunteers for building the Big Fish. The TV station's camera crew panned the crowd as they whooped and cheered. The mayor motioned to Maya to bring her the basket filled with raffle tickets.

"Let me FISH one out!" The mayor winked, and the crowd laughed again. She handed a ticket to Maya who read the numbers into the microphone.

*Stink bug!* Mac had kind of hoped he would win Maya's reusable water bottle. But the number on his ticket wasn't even close

Lacey glanced at her ticket and gasped. Quickly, she moved toward Alice.

"Here," she said. "Take this."

Alice looked at the ticket. “Why?” Her voice was a whisper. “You won fair and square.”

“You made a difference today.” Lacey placed the ticket in Alice’s hand. “I think you’ll really like the reusable bottle.”

Alice’s hand closed over the ticket. Her eyes were shiny. “You made a difference, too,” she said.



Yoko, Mac, and Julian stood by Lacey as the mayor shook Alice’s hand.

“How did you find her?” asked Yoko.



“I discovered a clue in the alley,” said Lacey.

“Someday,” Yoko said, “you are going to be as famous as Sherlock Holmes.”

Lacey’s cheeks grew rosy. Yoko knew that was a clue.

She was right. Lacey liked being compared to a famous detective. She planned to add that to the rest of her notes about The Big Fish by the Small Creek Community Project.





**Turn the page to see a real  
Big Fish Project**



# Where Do You Get the Ideas for Your Stories?



Authors tend to be curious. They also tend to be excellent observers.

The **setting**, or where the Cayuga Island Kids series takes place, is real. The island is located a few miles upstream from the mighty Niagara Falls. I grew up there, and I often return to walk the park, breathe in the smells, and appreciate the changes in seasons. My observations, along with memories, help me form ideas for my stories.

## Where Do You Get the Ideas for Your Stories?

The **characters** in the Cayuga Island Kids series are **fictional**. They are not real children or adults. However, I get ideas for what my characters do, say, think, and enjoy based on the actions of people I know or what I observe. I watch and I listen. There's also a bit of me in every character. Real people (and animals) often inspire fictional characters.

The **plot** is also **fictional**. The events in the story came from my imagination. Ideas for important elements in the story, however, came from my observations and experiences.

- Recycling is important to me. I reuse, repurpose, and recycle as much as possible. I try not to be wasteful. I encourage others to be respectful of our environment. The Big Fish in the story is based on an actual recycling structure I came upon when I visited the seaside in Portugal. I was so intrigued by that big fish! I took photos. I thought about the positive impact it has on the beach—

and on people's actions. Meanwhile, I was gathering ideas for this book. Gradually, the Big Fish found its way into my story.



- Verde Dry Cleaners is modeled after the dry cleaner I use in my community. It is a local, family-owned business mindful of the environment. They offer reusable dry cleaning bags and opt for safer cleaning methods.
- The Cayuga Island Kids want to make a difference in their community, but they run into snags and challenges. The **plot** of the story is based on experience. Working out

## Where Do You Get the Ideas for Your Stories?

problems while planning takes determination. Solutions are not always easy. Not every idea works. Teamwork helps. Sometimes we need to brainstorm, rethink, or look in a new direction.

Want to learn more about recycling, nurdles, mallards, or planning a community project? Want to know how to make a fish from a wire hanger? I learned about all of that and more as I wrote this book. Research leads to ideas! Investigate topics of interest in your school or public library and on safe online sites, just as the Cayuga Island Kids do. Remember what Mrs. Schieber recommends. Always check more than one source. Make sure the information is accurate. Be a fact detective.

Be an idea collector, too. Observe. Pay attention when something sparks your interest. Soon, you will have plenty of ideas for *your* stories!

*Find Cayuga Island Kids activities and an educator's guide at*  
**[www.judybradbury.com](http://www.judybradbury.com) and on**  
**[www.CityofLightPublishing.com](http://www.CityofLightPublishing.com).**



NOT FOR SALE



**Cayuga Island  
Kids  
Series**

**Book 3**

**The Case of the  
Messy Message  
and the Missing Facts**

## The Cayuga Island Kids



LACEY



MAC

## Other Cayuga Island Characters



MR. ESPOSITO



MRS. SCHIEBER



MS. CHOI



JULIAN



MAYA



YOKO



MADDIE



TAISHI

# CAYUGA IS

COLLEGE

SULLIVAN  
HOT LEGS

LIBRARY

MY SCHOOL

JOLIET

GRIFFON

Miss LYNNE

LITTLE  
FREE  
LIBRARY

MAYA

HENNEPIN

MY HOUSE

CHAMPLAIN

JULIAN



# ISLAND MAP

by MAC



*To the Cayuga Island Kids, past, present, and future.*

*~ Judy*



## Book 3

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*My childhood is a part of my story,  
and it's why I'm who I am today  
and why my career is what it is.*

*~ Misty Copeland*





Book 3  
Chapter One

# The Cayuga Island Kids

**F**or Lacey, one of the best parts of a new school year happens a few weeks before classes begin.

Store shelves overflow with school supplies.

Backpacks.

Scented markers.

Neon flexible rulers.

Pens with funny caps, like a kangaroo on a spring.

And best of all, shelves brim with notebooks in every possible size, shape, and design.

Lacey loves school supplies.

Gram knew this. That's why at the store, she reminded Lacey, "Let's keep to the essentials." Lacey held the list provided by the teachers. Gram pointed to the shopping cart. "Only items you absolutely need end up here."



Lacey walked up and down the school supplies aisles. She investigated, as all good detectives do. On a bottom shelf, she discovered bundled packs of notebooks. Lacey counted. There were enough for each subject, plus one extra. She did the math. The bundle was cheaper than buying single notebooks.

Lacey suggested they place the extra notebook in the Little Free Library that Gram had built for Cayuga Island Park. "I'll label it, 'Little Free Library Sharing Notebook.' Visitors can write messages about the books they like."

Gram approved, and they checked *notebooks* off the list.

Next, Lacey hefted a twelve pack of tissues into the cart. Each student had to bring in nine boxes. Lacey suggested they donate the extras to the pantry at the community center.

Gram had a coupon for a bonus pack of colored pencils.

Lacey found a reusable lunch bag with a mail-in rebate.

With all they saved, Lacey was able to convince Gram to let her add a nifty pen with three colors of ink to the cart. Three pens in one! “It’s not essential,” Lacey admitted, “but it’s perfect for organizing.”

Lacey didn’t mention what she intended to organize, but Gram agreed, and the pen made it into the cart. At the register, Gram plucked a small spiral notebook from a wire bin and added it to their pile of school supplies. “That’s for your pocket,” she said with a wink.

Lacey was ready for school. She was also ready for a fall full of mystery and adventure. She had a pen with three colors of ink. She could use a different color for clues, questions, and notes in her new pocket notebook.



For Mac, one of the best parts of starting the school year was his new Wild Frontier lunch

box. Well, it was new to him, even though it was almost as old as Uncle Anthony. It was his when he was Mac's age.

The lunch box was made of metal with a curved plastic handle. It even had a thermos tucked inside. There was only one small dent on the bottom corner. Uncle Anthony's eyes twinkled when he said, "That gives it character."

Mac agreed.

Mac's dad showed him how to rub away patches of rust along the edges of the lunch box. They scrubbed the handle and the thermos with baking soda.

Mac was glad that his new lunch box still looked old, just like his powder horn and coonskin cap. Those were his dad's when he was a kid, and now they were Mac's. He couldn't wear his cap to school, and he couldn't take along his powder horn, but every time he opened his desk, he could peek at his Wild Frontier lunch box. No matter what vegetable slices his mom made

sure he packed inside, his new old lunch box reminded him that adventures awaited.



Julian liked pretty much everything about a new school year. His friends met up at the bus stop. The school playground not only had climbing equipment, it had bird feeders, a sundial, a vegetable patch, and even a bee and butterfly garden.

A new school year meant learning new things. Julian was curious, and he liked facts. Science was always his favorite subject, but after discovering the history of Cayuga Island last summer, Julian was eager for Social Studies, too. And this year, he had library class twice a week.

Mrs. Schieber was the school librarian, and she made research come alive. She was also a Cayuga Island neighbor. Last summer she helped the Cayuga Island Kids solve a mystery. She also

baked the yummiest chocolate chip cookies ever for the Big Fish community project.

Since then, Julian and his dad had been trying to match her chocolate chip cookie goodness. Sure, they could have asked Mrs. Schieber for her recipe, but they decided it was more fun to experiment. Julian's friends liked being the samplers. Julian kept notes on all the recipes and his friends' comments on his tablet.

"We won't give up," Julian's dad declared. "Our recipe might be off by just a pinch of this or a tad of that!"

One of the words on Julian's *Junior Scientist's Word-of-the-Day* calendar was hypothesis. It means, "an explanation used in further investigation." Julian liked his dad's cookie recipe hypothesis. Further investigations were tasty!



Maya looked forward to the after-school activities. This year she was a helper in Ms. Choi's weekly craft club for younger students. The Make-and-Take Club met in the art room, which was Maya's most favorite classroom.

Maya's other most favorite classroom was the auditorium. It wasn't really a classroom, but it was where dance class happened. Right on the stage! It was perfect, because it was wood and it was wide. And since they danced on the stage all year, it wasn't scary being up there when it was time for the recital!

This year, Maya's dance class met twice a week. That meant she could wear all of her most favorite leotards more often. And maybe, just maybe, she'd be ready for en pointe work soon. Maya couldn't wait to get up on the tips of her toes!

Maya also met up with her friends after school in Cayuga Island Park. Last summer they made a big discovery right in the middle of a flower bed! They also planned a community project.



Maya's mom said, "You and your friends hit it out of the park." She was being funny, because the project took place in the park. But Maya knew her mom was proud of what they accomplished.

Now that it was fall, the Cayuga Island Kids couldn't meet in the park as often, but Maya was certain there was still plenty of time for adventure.



"A new school year is like a pile of wrapped packages," Yoko told her friends the week before school started. "It's full of surprises."

Yoko liked making comparisons. She thought that one up when the school supply list arrived. In the upper left-hand corner beside her grade and room number, she discovered a big surprise.

"I'm in Mr. Robinson's class!" Yoko announced.

"Lucky," Mac said. He and Julian had Ms. Spritski. She was the strictest teacher in their

school. No running in the hallways. No outside voices when she was around.

Yoko agreed with Mac.

Mr. Robinson led a lunchroom poetry slam. Yoko loved poetry. Even her name rhymed!

Mr. Robinson dressed like characters in books, and not only on Halloween.

Yoko loved to read. After all, she was going to be an author someday.

And Mr. Robinson was in charge of the school play.

Yoko planned to practice learning lines for the play. She would memorize homework pages and cafeteria menus. Then, when it was time to learn her part in the play, it would be as easy as tying sneakers.

Yoko knew from summer camp that acting is more than saying lines. Gestures and facial expressions—how we move our hands and arms, and the look on our faces—give clues to what we are feeling or thinking, even if we don't say a

word. Yoko planned to practice those, too.

Yoko's mind bubbled with plans for a school year full of adventure.

ARC  
NOT FOR SALE

Book 3  
Chapter Two

# Practice

**A**fter school, Julian stepped in line for the bus with the big **CI**—for Cayuga Island—in the window. The sun glinted off the wide windshield. He noticed leaves on a few trees were beginning to change color.

*Do all leaves change color in the fall? Julian wondered. Why are some leaves more colorful than others? Are the first trees to bud in the spring the first to lose their leaves in the fall? Or the last?*

Julian's thoughts shifted when he spotted Yoko. Her mouth was turned down. Her eyebrows bunched. Her hands made tight fists as she stamped toward the bus.



Julian left the line and hurried to meet her. “What’s wrong?” he asked. “You look angry.”

Suddenly, Yoko’s frown disappeared and her eyes brightened. She pumped the air. “Yes!” she exclaimed.

Now it was Julian’s eyebrows that bunched. Only he wasn’t upset. He was puzzled.

“I’m practicing,” Yoko announced.

“You’re practicing being mad?”

“I’m practicing *looking* mad,” Yoko explained as she stepped in line. “I think I nailed it.”

“Are you practicing *looking* glad now?” Julian asked. “Or are you really glad?”

That’s when Mac caught up to them. “Really glad about what?” he asked.

“I’m glad Julian thought I was upset even though I wasn’t,” Yoko answered.

“Wait. What?” Mac rubbed his head. He was almost as confused as he had been when his teacher was explaining fractions. Even though Ms. Spritski used a plastic pizza, fractions were not appealing. They muddled his brain.

“I’m practicing gestures and facial expressions,” Yoko continued as they moved up in the bus line. “I’m going to try out for the school play.”

Mac didn’t know exactly what gestures were. But he figured facial expressions were what you did with your face—smiles and frowns, a grin, and maybe sticking out your tongue. “Julian

thought you were mad, but you were glad. Did you mix up your faces?”

The friends giggled as they climbed the bus steps. Mac paused when he reached the driver. He dug into his backpack and offered Mrs. O’Doodle the snack pack of carrots from his lunch.

She jiggled the package. “Carrots are crammed with goodness, you know.”

Mac ducked his head. “I was full.”

Mrs. O’Doodle eyed Mac as she placed the carrots in the netted pocket on the side of the driver’s seat. “It’s kind of you to think of me.” Then she leaned toward Mac and patted his shoulder. “Carrots get better the more you eat them.”

Mac claimed the seat in front of Yoko and Julian. When Lacey boarded the bus, he waved and pointed to the seat beside him.

“No homework!” Lacey pumped her fist in the air. She slid into the seat beside Mac and

turned to face her friends. “Maya has Make-and-Take Club, but she can meet us in the park afterwards.” Maya was in Lacey’s class, so that meant she didn’t have homework, either. “I just have to put the cut-up vegetables in the pot for our soup tonight. Then I can head over.”

“I could have saved you some time,” Mac said. “I had carrots in my lunch.”

“Mmm. Carrots are so crunchy.” Lacey smacked her lips.

Mac shrugged. “I was full. I gave them to Mrs. O’Doodle.”

Suddenly, Yoko moaned. She held her mouth. She placed her forehead on the back of Lacey’s seat.

Mac peered at her. “You don’t like carrots, either?”

Yoko took a deep breath and exhaled. “Oooh.” She rubbed her stomach.

Lacey put her hand on Yoko’s shoulder. “Do you feel sick?”



Yoko's head popped up. "I'm fine!" She swung her legs and bounced in her seat.

"She was *practicing*." Julian eyed Yoko. "Right?"

Lacey looked from Julian to Yoko. "You were practicing feeling sick?"

"Voices down! Back pockets, meet the seats! Buckle up, buckaroos. This bronco is leaving the chute!" Mrs. O'Doodle bellowed from the front of the bus.

Yoko sat back. "I'll tell you all about it at the park," she promised Lacey.

"We have homework." Mac pointed to himself and Julian. "Fractions." He groaned, and he wasn't practicing. He really was feeling bad about that.

"We can work on our homework together," Julian offered. "We'll use chocolate chip cookies to figure out the problems."

Mac brightened. "I am a little hungry."

"Mac, my friend! Feet on the floor. Face

forward!” Mrs. O’Doodle didn’t have eyes in the back of her head. But she did have a big mirror aimed at the rows of students behind her.

Mac settled beside Lacey. The door squeaked closed and the bus rumbled away from the curb.

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Book 3

Chapter Three

# Missing

**A**t the park, Pesky was being pesky, so Lacey placed a treat for him on the ground. She held her hand up. “Wait,” she commanded.

While Pesky focused on the biscuit, Lacey turned her attention back to Maya.

“...So while Ms. Choi explained to the little kids how to make a greeting card, I passed out the supplies. I collected them at the end of the meeting. Ms. Choi and I were putting everything away when we noticed two glitter pens were missing.”

“Missing?” Lacey leaned forward. This sounded mysterious. “Did you check under the tables?” she asked. “How about the trash can? Could someone have thrown them out because they were used up?”



Maya picked up a maple leaf that had fallen to the ground. “We checked the floor, the trash can, and even the chairs.” She followed the outline of the maple leaf with her finger. “We didn’t find them.”

Lacey patted Pesky’s head and pointed to the treat. “Okay!” His tail wagged as he pounced on the biscuit. She pulled her notebook from her pocket. At the top of the page in red ink, she wrote

*Make-and-Take Club Mystery*

She clicked to the blue ink. “Begin at the beginning. Tell me everything.” She paused. “Give me the *important* details.”

“I just did,” said Maya.

Lacey’s pen hung over the notebook. “How do you know that two glitter pens were missing?”

Maya looked up at the maple tree, thinking. “Ms. Choi had a check-in list. Before the kids came in, we counted out two glitter pens, one piece of cardstock, and a glue stick for each person.”

Maya snapped her fingers. “We also filled bowls with decorations. Two bowls for each table. The pieces were all different shapes and colors!” Maya paused. “But I guess that isn’t important.”

“Probably not,” Lacey said. She waited for her friend to continue.

“While Ms. Choi showed examples of greeting card designs, I passed out the supplies. Except the paper towels.” Maya tapped Lacey’s notebook. “I forgot to tell you about those. They were for cleanup at the end of the meeting.” Maya took a breath. “Anyway, after Ms. Choi answered questions, everyone got busy.”

Lacey flipped to a new page in her notebook. “What happened after they made their cards?”

“We had Show and Tell. Then we put the cards in baggies so they’d be safe in their backpacks.” Maya stood and stretched. She circled her head with her arms and twirled. When she noticed Lacey was waiting, she continued. “Everyone passed the glitter pens and glue sticks

to me. Ms. Choi collected the bowls. I helped wipe down the tables. Little kids aren't that good at clean up." Maya's head bobbed. "They hung up their aprons and then they left." Maya stopped. "I forgot to tell you. Ms. Choi has aprons for the kids to wear so their clothes don't get dirty. Little kids aren't that good at crafts." Maya bent her knees and straightened. Then she twirled again. "I'm pretty sure that's everything."

"How did you figure out what was missing?" Lacey asked.

"After the kids left, Ms. Choi and I put away the supplies. That's when we realized glitter pens were missing. There were two empty spaces in the trays." Maya sighed. "We looked everywhere. Ms. Choi even checked her apron pockets!"

Lacey clicked from blue ink to green ink. In her notebook she wrote

*\*\* What happened to the missing glitter pens??? \*\**

Lacey promised Maya she would think about the Make-and-Take Club Mystery.



By the time Julian and Mac arrived at the park, Yoko was playing fetch with Pesky.

Mac looked around. The big rocks along the creek were waiting to be hopped across. He spotted their neighbor. Mr. Esposito volunteered as the Cayuga Island Park groundskeeper. He mowed, he weeded, he planted flowers. Today he was raking around the Little Free Library. Down the path, the late afternoon sun slanted across the peak on the playground castle.

“Adventures await!” Mac announced to his friends.



“And a mystery.” Lacey patted the pocket holding her notebook.

“We’ll explain later,” Maya said as she hopped up. “Ready! Set! Go!”

The friends raced to the playground.

Pesky won.

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Book 3  
Chapter Four

# Cookie Research

**A**fter dinner, Julian and his dad tried a new chocolate chip cookie recipe. While the cookies baked, Julian made notes about the recipe on his tablet. Then they worked as a team to clean up the kitchen.

Julian's father placed the scoop in the flour bin and popped on the lid. It made a snapping sound. It was good to go. He slid the canister down the counter.

Julian stood ready with a damp towel. He caught the canister and spun it as he wiped away flour dust. When he was finished, he slid it back to his dad. The sugar tin was next.

Meanwhile, the timer ticked. When it dinged, Julian and his dad stood side by side at the oven. They eased open the door and peeked inside.

Were the edges golden? Was it time to slide the baking sheet out of the oven?

Julian's glasses fogged from the heat. "Your call, Dad!" He removed his glasses and waved them in the air.

Once the cookies had cooled, Julian's dad lifted two from the rack.



They inspected the cookies. “The color is great,” Julian said, reaching for his tablet. “They’re not too dark, but not too light, either.”

They each took a bite.

“The chips are gooey. I like that,” Julian noted.

“It’s hard to complain about a warm cookie.” Julian’s dad smacked his lips. “But—for research purposes—the edges are flat and crunchy while the middle is a little too chewy.”

Julian knew from reading on the internet that there are variables when baking cookies. Food science. Ingredients and methods make a difference. He clicked to the cookie chart he had saved on his tablet. Flat, crunchy edges and a chewy middle might mean they needed to adjust the amount of baking powder and baking soda.

Julian’s dad brushed crumbs from the corner of his mouth. He looked up and pointed to a wet spot on the ceiling. “Cookie research is way

better than water leak research. I'm off to the attic to investigate."

"I'll finish cleaning up," Julian offered.

When his dad removed his apron, he found a measuring spoon in the pocket. He tossed it to Julian and headed up the stairs.

Julian washed the bowl and spoons and wiped down the counters. He chose a plump cookie to tuck in his dad's lunch sack. Next, he wrapped five cookies—one to share with each of his friends tomorrow, and one for himself. Then he wrapped one more. You never knew who might need a cookie.

Book 3  
Chapter Five

# Specks

**A**t the lunch table the next day, Yoko gladly accepted Mac's carrots. She placed each round slice between two of her cucumber slices to make tiny sandwiches. She offered one to Mac, but he shook his head. Julian was passing out cookies.

"Samplers, you have work to do," Julian joked. "Let me know what you think of this batch."

Julian was powering up his tablet to take notes when Maddie Pratt came by their table. She was on her way to return her lunch tray. A half-eaten snack pie lay crumbled in the corner. When Maddie spotted the chocolate chip



cookies, she stopped. “Did you buy those here?” she asked. She forgot to say hi first.



“Julian and his dad baked them,” Maya answered. “Don’t they look delicious?”

Julian reached in his lunch bag for the extra cookie. He slid his chair over to make room. Maddie could be a sampler, too.

But Maddie didn’t seem to notice. And she forgot to answer Maya.

She leaned over Lacey’s shoulder. Her tray tilted. The plastic fork skated toward the edge. Her bangs fell forward as she took a closer look.

“There are specks in those cookies.” Maddie’s milk carton tipped and dribbled over the corner of the tray. “I bet they’re bugs! Flour bugs!” Her voice rose. “They look just like a picture I saw on the internet!”

Lacey put her hand up to steady the tray. “What are you talking about, Maddie?” She brushed a few drops of milk from her sleeve.

Maddie stepped back. She looked from the cookies to Julian. One side of her mouth lifted and her eyebrow arched. She pointed to Julian’s

tablet. “Look it up. You’ll see!”

Mac put down his cookie.

Maya held her napkin up and wiped a bit of cookie from her mouth.

Julian’s cheeks burned. Maddie wasn’t the friendliest kid in school. She could be bossy, and she liked things her way. But she wasn’t mean. He didn’t think she would say something just to hurt someone’s feelings.

Meanwhile, Yoko watched their classmate walk away. Maddie’s shoulders hunched and she shuddered. After she cleared her tray, she whispered to Minh, who was waiting in line behind her. Minh’s eyes widened. Her mouth formed an O. She looked toward Julian and wrinkled her nose.



Book 3

Chapter Six

# Flour Facts

**A**fter school, Lacey gathered books to donate to the Little Free Library. She weeded three mysteries she had finished from her bookshelf headboard. She dusted off two more she found under her bed. Gram added a thick biography and a few magazines to the stack.

Lacey piled everything into a cloth grocery bag and hefted it over her shoulder. “Maya and I will stop at the park on our way home from Julian’s house,” she told Gram.

Once they had all arrived, the kids gathered at the island in Julian’s kitchen. In front of them

were the remaining cookies from the batch and the flour canister.



Julian had loaded three websites on his tablet. Each offered information about flour bugs. Julian knew that just because something was on the internet didn't make it true. That's why he always checked more than one source.

"Flour bugs are common," he reported. "And they won't hurt you if they're baked into your food."

“That’s good news.” Mac eyed the cookies.  
“I guess.”

Julian continued reading. “There are ways to avoid flour bugs. Putting flour in the freezer for a few days after you buy it works. So does storing flour in an airtight container.”

Yoko reached for the flour canister and popped off the top. “This lid is as tight as a new pair of dress shoes.” She peered inside the bin. “What do flour bugs look like?”

Julian clicked to images of flour bugs.

“Ewww!” Maya’s forehead rumped.

Lacey read the caption. “These pictures are magnified. Flour bugs are tiny, but you can see them. They look like brown specks.”

“And the specks in the flour will be moving,” Julian added.

*Specks.* Mac recalled that was the word Maddie had used when she saw the cookies. His mouth soured. Learning about flour bugs was definitely ruining his appetite for cookies.

But when his friends leaned over the canister, he did, too. Searching for flour bugs was sort of an adventure.

Julian dug into the flour with the scoop. He pushed it around. No specks. "I have an idea." Julian opened a drawer and took out a roll of waxed paper. "Let's spread some flour out and see if we discover any bugs."

Lacey pulled out her magnifying glass. Maya flipped on another set of kitchen lights. The kids examined the fluffy mound. It was dusty, but it was pure white.

"No bugs," declared Yoko. She brushed one hand against the other as if to say, "That's that!"

The side door squeaked and Julian's dad walked into the kitchen. He placed his lunch sack by the sink and gave Julian a shoulder hug. "Thanks for the surprise cookie. Lots of chunks of chocolate." He gestured a thumbs up, and then he noticed the flour on the counter. "Are you making another batch already?"

Julian told his dad about Maddie and the cookie specks. He showed him the flour bug images. His father held up his hand and shook his head.

“This bin is old and dented, but it’s sturdy and airtight.” He patted the canister and smiled at the kids. “It belonged to Julian’s grandfather, my father. He wasn’t much for cookies, but I learned to bake bread from him when I was about your age.” He paused. “On Saturday mornings, we bought flour from a mill. When we brought it home, we placed it in the freezer. Our flour comes from the grocery store,” he continued, “but I still freeze it for a few days.” He looked from Julian to his friends. “Chances are slim we have flour bugs.”

“Phew!” Mac reached for one of the cookies. He wouldn’t be giving them up after all.

“What could have caused the specks?” Lacey asked.

Julian’s face lit up. “I should have thought of



this before!” He clicked to a saved image on his tablet. “I’ll check the cookie variable chart.”

It didn’t take long to find an answer. There was even a photograph. “Small brown spots can occur from over baking,” he read. “Lower the temperature by 25 degrees.”

Yoko sat back. She was glad for Julian, but she was troubled, too.

“Maddie jumped to conclusions about Julian’s cookies. The wrong conclusions,” Yoko said. “Then she told Minh. And from the look on Minh’s face, I’m pretty sure she believed Maddie.”

Lacey shook her head and sputtered.

Yoko hesitated, looking at her friends. “After Maddie left our table, none of us ate the cookies.”

Julian nodded. It was true.

Yoko spoke softly. “We all believed Maddie. We jumped to conclusions, too.”

Book 3  
Chapter Seven

# Messy Message

**A**t the park, Lacey and Maya waved to Mr. Esposito. Today, he was clearing branches from along the creek. A jumbo bag of plastic bottles was stuffed into the back of his golf cart-turned-gardening cart. When they passed by the big fish recycling bin, it was no mystery that it was empty.

Lacey unlatched the door of the Little Free Library and straightened the few items remaining on the shelves. Anyone was welcome to take a book or leave a book. The book-sharing box was popular.

Lacey unpacked the bag and placed the books and magazines she had brought from

home inside the box. Maya held out a beginner's craft book and two fairy tales. Lacey placed them on the shelf. Finally, she pulled out the sharing notebook. Reading what people wrote about the books they borrowed was one of Lacey's favorite parts of taking care of the Little Free Library.



She noticed that the pen she had clipped to the notebook was missing. Again. Lacey dug in her bag. "I'm running out of pens," she said. "They always seem to get lost or broken."

“I’ll think of a way to attach the pen to the notebook,” Maya offered. “I can brainstorm ideas with Ms. Choi.”

Lacey knew she could count on Maya to come up with the perfect solution.

The girls leaned over the notebook as Lacey flipped through the pages. She paused when she landed on a message she hadn’t read before.

“Vincent liked a book about sunfish.” Lacey laughed. “He’s hoping it’s okay if he keeps it until he has to write a book report.”

Lacey flipped the page and found two sheets stuck together. Carefully, she peeled them apart.

Maya squinted at the blurred words. “This message is written with a glitter pen. Whoever wrote it didn’t let the ink dry before closing the notebook.”

Lacey pulled out her magnifying glass to see if that would help. But all the girls could make out was



“I bet this person read one of the Pet Care Adventure books Yoko donated,” Maya guessed.

“I wish we could read the whole note. But at least this person had something to write with.” Lacey tucked the sharing notebook into the library and closed the door.

“Wait a minute!” Quickly, Lacey flipped up the latch and reached back inside the library. She pulled out the notebook and opened to the crinkled page. “This message is written in *glitter pen*.”

Maya gasped. She was pretty sure they were both thinking the same thought.

*Was the note written with one of Ms. Choi's missing glitter pens?*

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Book 3  
Chapter Eight

# Research Explorers

**M**rs. Schieber stood at the door to the library. She welcomed each student with a special greeting. She bowed, fist-bumped, saluted, and hive-fived. She curtsied with Maya and tapped her pen against Lacey's. Students smiled as they took their seats at the long library tables.

Mrs. Schieber had loaded a website on the board. Across the top in curvy letters it said

*All About  
Explorers*

Below that was an image of a compass.

Julian sat close to the front. Mrs. Schieber was not only kind and funny, she also liked facts, just like Julian. Mrs. Schieber knew something about everything. She was the school librarian, after all.



The room quieted as Mrs. Schieber stepped to the board. “Let’s begin by reviewing what we know about research and fact-finding.”



Julian raised his hand. “Always check more than one source,” he said. “See if the information is the same.”

“Check more than just the internet.” Cami pointed toward the library shelves. “Look in books, too.”

Maya raised her hand. “Just because you read something online doesn’t make it true.”

“Same with books!” Jeffrey Joe called out.

“Don’t believe everything you hear, either.” Yoko looked across the room to Minh. “Just because someone says something doesn’t make it true.”

Lacey held her pen up. “Be a fact detective!”

“I like that! It sums up what everyone has said.” Mrs. Schieber tipped her pen toward Lacey.

“Today, we begin our research projects.” Mrs. Schieber moved to the board. “By now you know of my interest in explorers. After all, I live on Cayuga Island. My street is named after Father Louis Hennepin.”

She began walking among the tables. “Hundreds of years ago, Hennepin was the first person to see and describe Niagara Falls. The clothespin used to be called a hen’s pin. It was named after Hennepin because he invented a way to dry clothes on board the ship during explorations. He even wrote a book called *A New Discovery*.”

Mrs. Schieber paused. “Do you agree that researching explorers will be exciting?” she asked.

Students signaled with a thumbs-up. Feet tucked under chairs began swinging.

Mrs. Schieber looked across the room. “What did you find interesting about Father Hennepin?”

Hands waved. When Mrs. Schieber called on students, they recited something she had told them.

Next Mrs. Schieber asked, “How do you know that what I told you about Father Hennepin is true?”

“Because you’re our teacher!” exclaimed Maddie.

“Because you live on Hennepin Avenue?” Chara offered.

“I live there, too!” Mac added, even though that didn’t answer Mrs. Schieber’s question.

“We know you’re interested in explorers,” said Jeffrey Joe. “And you read a lot!”

“I am your teacher. I live on Hennepin Avenue. Indeed, I am interested in explorers.” Mrs. Schieber’s eyes glittered. “And I do love to read.”

She looked from table to table. “But none of those facts guarantee that what I told you about Father Hennepin is factual.”

Mrs. Schieber clicked a button and a list of reminders appeared on the board.

**LOOK CLOSELY AT INFORMATION YOU FIND.**

**INVESTIGATE MORE THAN ONE SOURCE.**

**CHECK THE FACTS.**

Mrs. Schieber summed up. “Be wise research explorers as you research your explorers.” She paused so the class could enjoy the way she played with the words.

Mac raised his hand. “Was there something you told us about Father Hennepin that wasn’t true?”

“Excellent! Mac is checking facts.” She held up her finger and waited until she had everyone’s full attention. “I gave you some *misinformation*,” she said, emphasizing *mis-*. “Father Louis Hennepin was the first *European* to see and describe Niagara Falls. But he wasn’t the first person to see Niagara Falls. That would be the Native Americans who lived in our area. When facts are missing, it blurs the truth.”

Students murmured.

“Also...” Mrs. Schieber paused again. “Part of the information I gave you about Hennepin was completely untrue.”

The room buzzed.

“False information given on purpose is called *disinformation*. It’s meant to trick or mislead and that’s serious.”

Mrs. Schieber turned to Mac. “Would you like to research Father Hennepin? Figure out what information I gave was false?”

Mac raised both hands in the air. “I’m on it!”

The class roared, including Mrs. Schieber. She clicked the button and a website link and list of explorers appeared. “Fact detectives, copy this link. I’d like you to begin your research by visiting this website. Now, let’s choose explorers and team up!”

Julian sat forward. Samuel de Champlain was on the list! Julian lived on Champlain Avenue. “Can I research Champlain?” he asked.

“You *may* research Champlain.” Mrs. Schieber winked.

“Wait! I wanted Champlain.”

Julian turned when he heard Maddie’s voice.

She swiped at her bangs. “My aunt lives in Quebec. We visited Lake Champlain last

summer.” She crossed her arms. “I want to research Champlain.”

“Wonderful,” declared Mrs. Schieber. “You may partner with Julian.” She made a note and then looked across the room. “Are there any other requests?”

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Book 3

Chapter Nine

# Clues

**A**fter school, Maya and Lacey hurried down the hall. They had only a few minutes before their bus would leave. The girls found Ms. Choi sitting at her desk. A heavy white book lay open in front of her.

“Maya!” she exclaimed. “I’m glad you stopped in. I am preparing for our next Make-and-Take project. What do you think about creating kindness rocks to leave along the sidewalks in our neighborhoods?”

Maya sprang onto her toes. “Kindness rocks!” She noticed the puzzled look on Lacey’s face. “You decorate a rock and write a message

that will brighten someone's day. That's why they're called kindness rocks." She looked to Ms. Choi, who nodded. "Then you leave the rock in a place where it's sure to be found." Maya clapped her hands. "I love that idea!"

"I had a hunch you would." Ms. Choi smiled. "I'm working on a set of directions and a list of supplies. "We need colorful paints that won't wash away when it rains. And rocks, of course." She turned to Lacey. "We can always use another helper if you'd like to join us."





A kindness rocks project sounded friendly and fun, but Lacey's mind was on mystery. "Actually, supplies are the reason we stopped by," she told Ms. Choi.

"That's right!" Maya's thoughts shifted away from kindness rocks. "Did you find the missing glitter pens?" she asked.

Ms. Choi shook her head. "I'm afraid I did not."

Maya's smile drooped, but almost as quickly lifted back into place. "Maybe we can help." Maya knew Lacey liked to begin at the beginning. "We take care of the Little Free Library in Cayuga Island Park," she began.

Lacey zeroed in. "There's a sharing notebook inside. It's for borrowers to leave notes about the books. One of the messages was written in glitter pen."

Ms. Choi waited for the girls to go on.

"We wondered." Maya shrugged. "Could the person who wrote the message have taken

the missing glitter pens?”

Ms. Choi folded her hands. “Glitter pens are popular. They’re easily found in craft stores and even drugstores. I don’t think we can assume that whoever wrote in the sharing notebook took the club glitter pens.” She looked from girl to girl. She smiled, but it was a small smile, not like the one she had on her face when she was talking about kindness rocks.

Maya realized Ms. Choi was right. She herself had an assortment of glitter pens in the craft drawer in her bedroom. Maya’s shoulders slumped. “We jumped to conclusions.”

“We just want to help,” Lacey reasoned. She was ready to work on the case. “We could investigate who wrote the message. We have a few clues.”

“Clues?” Ms. Choi’s head tilted.

Lacey pulled the Little Free Library sharing notebook from her backpack. She opened to the page with the glitter pen message and offered it

to Ms. Choi. "It's hard to read because the pages stuck together."

Maya leaned over the desk. "That could be a clue. Maybe the person hasn't used glitter pens much. Maybe they didn't know to wait for the ink to dry before closing the book."

"Some of the words are misspelled. That's a clue," said Lacey.

"The person drew a cat." Maya pointed to the picture. "It's such a cute cat!"

Ms. Choi studied the page in the notebook.

"The person really liked a book about pets," Lacey noted. "That's another clue."

Suddenly, Maya realized the halls were quiet. That was a clue! She pulled on Lacey's arm. "We have to catch our bus!"

Ms. Choi handed the sharing notebook to the girls. "Let me think about this before our next club meeting."

Maya's face lit up. "Kindness rocks! I can't wait. Would you like me to collect some rocks?"

“That’s very *kind* of you.” Ms. Choi’s smile grew wide again.

“I’m going to put a kindness rock beside the Little Free Library!” Maya announced as the girls hurried out the door.

By the time they got to the bus, Maya was already thinking about what to write on her rock.

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Book 3  
Chapter Ten

# Plans

**M**ac's lunchbox clattered as he raced to catch up with Yoko. "Maya and I are going to the public library to work on our explorer project. Do you want to come?"

"I'd much rather practice gestures." Yoko shoved her hands in her pockets. Her shoulders rose to meet her ears. "But sure. I don't know much about explorers. And we got stuck with two! Lewis *and* Clark. At least I lucked out teaming with Lacey."

"I lucked out, too." Mac was thinking of Maya. "Julian, not so much." Mac was thinking of Maddie. At least he and Julian didn't have

fractions homework tonight. They both lucked out there.

Yoko and Mac boarded the bus and found their friend hunched over his tablet. He was reading about Champlain, of course. Maya and Lacey rushed up the bus steps just before Mrs. O'Doodle cranked the door closed.

Once in their seats, the friends made plans to meet at the library.

"I guess I should invite Maddie," Julian mumbled. He busied himself with putting away his tablet.

Lacey harrumphed. "I wonder if Miss Information has some *misinformation* to share about Champlain." Lacey emphasized *mis-* just as Mrs. Schieber had.

Yoko noticed bright spots like cinnamon balls colored Julian's cheeks. She scowled. "Grrr! I'm practicing my mad-at-Maddie face."

Julian knew his friends were thinking about his cookies and the cafeteria. "It'll be fine," he

said. He waved his hand as if having to team with Maddie was no big deal. But his forehead wrinkled as if it were.

Maya's eyes clouded with concern.

"Maddie *bugs* me." Mac slapped his neck, pretending to be swatting at a flying insect.

Lacey pulled out her magnifying glass and held it up as if inspecting Mac's neck.

"You both should try out for the school play!" exclaimed Yoko.



That brought a burst of giggles. Even Julian was smiling—all the way to his eyes.

Mac was glad. He liked it better when his friends were laughing than when they were frowning—even if they had good reason.

“Remember when Mrs. Schieber told us to be wise research explorers as we research our explorers?” Julian patted the pocket in his backpack that held his tablet. “When we get to the library, I want to show you something.”

The door to the bus whined and slapped to a close. “Shoulders back, sit bones down! Buckle up, space cadets. This missile is about to blast off!” Mrs. O’Doodle began counting down from ten.

With two short beeps of the horn, and a wave to the crossing guard, Mrs. O’Doodle eased the bus away from the curb.



Book 3  
Chapter Eleven

# Mis - Dis - Information

**T**he kids gathered at their favorite study table in the far corner of the public library. Chairs bumped together in front of screens. Heads hovered over maps.

The kids read. They scratched notes.

And they laughed.

“That Mrs. Schieber!” exclaimed Mac. Then he remembered he was in the library. He lowered his voice. “Hennepin didn’t invent the clothespin!”

“What?” Maddie huffed in disbelief. But Julian smiled.

“We’re pretty sure Mrs. Schieber made that up,” Maya confirmed. “We couldn’t find anything about a hen’s pin in the books about Hennepin.”

“So we looked up the clothespin.” Mac fanned the pages of a hefty book. “No sign of clothespins until the 1800s.” His whisper grew louder. “Hennepin lived in the 1600s!”

“Mrs. Schieber wants us to research explorers. But more than that, she wants us to research facts.” Lacey wiggled her pen between her fingers. “Be a fact detective,” she murmured, repeating the words she had said in class.

Yoko pointed to Mac’s book. “Mrs. Schieber wanted to see if you could figure out which ‘facts’ she shared were false.” Yoko gestured with air quotes.

“*Disinformation*,” said Julian.

Maya rose and stood behind her chair. She placed her hand on the back and pointed her toes outward. “Mrs. Schieber told us about a book Hennepin wrote, *The New Discovery*. I figured it

was about the hen's pin—or the clothespin.”

“Me, too!” Yoko smacked her forehead. She knew that gesture was like saying, “Duh!”

“Hennepin did write that book,” Mac said. “But it’s about his explorations, not his laundry.”

“Misinformation,” said Julian.

Lacey agreed. “Part of what Mrs. Schieber said was true. But facts are missing, just like when she told us about Hennepin being the first to see Niagara Falls.”



Maddie's fingers drummed the table. "Mrs. Schieber shouldn't share information that isn't true. What if we told other kids about the hen's pin?" Her eyes flashed. "If we said we heard it from a teacher, they would believe it, too." Maddie's voice rose. "If they told someone, and that person told someone else, pretty soon a bunch of people would think the clothespin was invented by Hennepin." She shook her head and her bangs swung across her forehead. "That's just not right."

The table grew silent.

The Cayuga Island Kids looked at each other and then their eyes rested on Julian.

They were all thinking about chocolate chip cookies.

Book 3  
Chapter Twelve

# Fact Detectives

**T**he Cayuga Island Kids looked from Julian to Maddie.

Maddie's eyes darted around the table. Her cheeks pinked. "Am I wrong about sharing false information?" she sputtered. Her chin jutted an inch higher.

"No, Maddie. You're right." Julian slid his tablet to the center of the table so everyone could see the screen. "On the bus I checked the website Mrs. Schieber gave us. I read about Champlain. Something didn't seem right, so I checked another source." He shrugged his shoulders and the corners of his mouth lifted. "And then I

checked another one.” Julian tapped and scrolled to a section he had highlighted. “This information about Champlain isn’t true.”

“So the website Mrs. Schieber told us to use has false facts, too?” Maddie leaned over and read the highlighted section aloud.

CHAMPLAIN LEARNED TO NAVIGATE FROM HIS FATHER, A SEA CAPTAIN. A NAVIGATION SYSTEM CALLED RADAR HAD BEEN INVENTED JUST BEFORE HE SAILED TO THE SPANISH COLONIES IN NORTH AMERICA BETWEEN 1599 AND 1601.

Lacey burst out laughing. “I’m not sure exactly when radar was invented, but it wasn’t in the 1600s!”

“It was invented in the 1900s.” Julian scrolled up the page. “Most of the information about Champlain on this website is true. But some of it is false.”

“Tricky,” mused Mac. No wonder Mrs.

Schieber was one of his favorite teachers.

“It’s sort of funny because obviously it’s not true,” said Maya. “But false information that isn’t obvious isn’t so funny. It can hurt.” She faced Maddie and spoke softly. “Remember when you said the specks in Julian’s cookies were flour bugs?”

Maddie stiffened. “I read about flour bugs on the internet. They’re real. I saw pictures!”

“We saw them, too.” Maya grimaced.

“You told me to look them up,” Julian reminded Maddie. “We did.”

“It’s true that flour bugs can look like specks in cookies,” said Yoko. “But not all specks in cookies are flour bugs.”

“So, then, they could have been bugs!” Maddie voice was pinched.

“We learned some other facts from Julian’s dad,” said Maya.

“He’s kind of an expert on flour,” explained Mac.

“We investigated Julian’s flour.” Lacey patted the pocket holding her magnifying glass. “No bugs.”

Maddie groaned. “I told Minh!” She cradled her chin in her hand. Her voice grew small. “I didn’t mean to spread false information.” Her eyes reddened. “I really didn’t mean to hurt your feelings, Julian.”

Maya put a hand on Maddie’s arm. “You read something and then you saw something, and you jumped to conclusions.” Suddenly, the sharing notebook came to mind.

“We all jumped to conclusions,” admitted Yoko, remembering the uneaten cookies on the lunchroom table.

Maddie lowered her head onto her arms. “I’m really, really sorry!”

Mac shrugged his shoulders and held out his hands. “Everybody makes mistakes.”

“My dad says mistakes are how we learn,” said Julian. “But usually he’s talking about cookie recipes.”



Maddie raised her head and found Julian's grin. She laughed along with the others.

"We're learning to be fact detectives," Lacey said.

"I'll set the facts straight with Minh," Maddie promised.



Lacey held up her hand to Maddie.

High-fives circled the table. But the friends slapped softly. They were in the library, after all.

Book 3

Chapter Thirteen

# Suspect

**O**n their way out of the library, the kids passed the community room. Maya heard mewing and stopped to peek inside. She pulled on Lacey's arm. "Miss Lynne's here with her scout troop!"

Their neighbor was at the check-in table. She waved them in and Maya hurried around the table to give her a hug.

Miss Lynne spoke in a low voice. "My troop is very excited. Today we have a guest from the animal shelter."

The young scouts crowded on the floor in front of a short round table. A woman in a jacket

with an emblem on her shoulder stood before them.

Inside a wire cage on the table was a rumpled blue blanket. It moved, and out from under it wiggled two kittens. One was cream-colored, like vanilla ice cream. The other was black, with a spike of fur between its ears.



The woman patted the top of the cage. She leaned down, looking from girl to girl. “Are you ready to learn how to properly handle a kitten?”

The scouts clapped and cheered, but quickly quieted when the woman held a finger to her lips. “We don’t want to frighten the kittens.” She spoke in a low voice. “Tip number one. Talk softly and move slowly when approaching a cat that does not know you.”

A hand shot up in the air. “I love kitties! I wish I could have one, but my brother is allergic.”

Even from the back, Maya could see the colorful beads on the girl’s tumble of braids. *Kittens would love how those dance when she moves*, Maya thought. She knew her cat Sparky would!

The woman opened the cage door slowly and the black kitten scampered toward her. His tail shot up and he rubbed his face against her hand. “This is Milo,” she said.

“He likes you!” declared a girl sitting on her knees.

Meanwhile, the other kitten’s body hung low as she slinked forward. Her tail swished.

“She’s nervous,” Maya whispered to Lacey.

Right then, the woman said, “This is Ophelia. She’s uneasy.”

“We should get going,” Lacey said.

“It was nice to see you both,” Miss Lynne whispered.

Just then a scout pushed the door open and rushed inside. “I’m late!” she announced. A gust of wind swept into the room. It blew across the check-in table, and a stack of papers scattered.

The girl wrung her hands. “I’m sorry!” She looked from Miss Lynne to the woman holding the kitten.

Miss Lynne patted the girl’s shoulder. “Go on and sit down. I’ll have these picked up in a jiffy.”

Lacey and Maya hurried to help Miss Lynne. The girl with the colorful braids jumped up to return a paper that had landed near her foot.

Lacey crawled under the table to reach another paper.

She stared at the sparkly drawing.



Lacey showed the note to Maya before placing it on the pile.

“That one’s mine!” the girl announced proudly.

She took a few steps toward the group and then stopped. She turned and looked closely at Maya. “Aren’t you Ms. Choi’s helper in Make-and-Take Club?”

Maya read the girl’s nametag, Taishi. She recalled the name from Ms. Choi’s check-in

list. Suddenly, Maya recognized her. Ms. Choi had remarked on how well her purple beaded headband matched the apron she had chosen from the hooks beside the supply closet. “Did you pick that apron on purpose?” Ms. Choi had kidded.

“Of course!” the girl had answered. “It’s purple!” Maya remembered thinking her laugh sounded like a bubbly waterfall.

“I love Make-and-Take Club!” Taishi whispered. “Almost as much as I love kitties!” Her giggle followed her as she skipped back to join the group.

Book 3  
Chapter Fourteen

# Meet at the Scene

**T**he next afternoon, Lacey hurried down the aisle of the bus toward her friends. She waved her notebook above her head. “We have more clues to the mystery!”

“We still haven’t heard the first clues,” Mac reminded her.

“Right.” Lacey drew her notebook in close. “You will find out everything when we meet at the scene.”

“The scene?” Julian was curious. “Like in a crime?”

“The scene?” Yoko echoed. “Like in a play?”

“The Little Free Library,” Lacey replied. “The scene where we found the clues.”



“Clues to the mystery—that we’ll tell you all about.” Maya assured Mac. Then she answered Julian. “Clues to a crime. Well, sort of a crime. Maybe.”

Then Maya zipped her lips. If she kept on talking, she’d tell them everything, including some details that probably weren’t important.

Yesterday, after they left the scout meeting, she and Lacey had agreed on a plan. They would meet their friends at the Little Free Library in the park where they could look at the sharing notebook, talk through the clues, and brainstorm ideas.

“Adventure awaits!” Mac unloaded his backpack from his shoulder. That’s when he remembered his fractions homework buried inside.

Yesterday, Ms. Spritski had given them one night off from math homework to work on their explorer projects—but one night only. “Your math brains will get rusty if you don’t practice,” she declared.

Mac sank into his seat. Adventure might have to wait.



Julian figured only fractions could cause Mac to slump like that. “Let’s work on our homework together,” he suggested to his friend. “You can sample the new batch of cookies Dad and I made last night while we tackle the fractions.”

Mac brightened. “Your cookies make fractions a whole lot easier to take.”

Julian invited the others to come, too.

But Lacey had to clean her room and brush Pesky before she could go to the park. Or maybe, she would brush Pesky and then clean her room.

Maya had promised to collect rocks for Ms. Choi's Make-and-Take Club project.

And Yoko wanted to practice a few more of the gestures displayed on the poster she had hung in her room before she headed to the park. She planned to memorize them all. She might even try out a few when they met at the scene.

"Hit the mute button on your amplifiers!" Mrs. O'Doodle commanded from the front of the bus. "We are about to rock and roll—silent movie style!"

The friends quickly agreed on a time to gather at the Little Free Library and took their seats.

# Gestures



Happy



Scared



Puzzled



Surprised



Sad



Angry

Book 3  
Chapter Fifteen

# Feeling Good

**M**ac was on his way to Julian's house. The fur tail on his coonskin cap swished in a friendly way. It wasn't really fur, and Mac liked that. His powder horn swung from his shoulder. It was much lighter than his backpack had been, and Mac liked that, too.

When he thought about his backpack, Mac realized he had forgotten to take his fraction worksheet out of it before he set off for Julian's house.

*Stink bug!* He was almost halfway there!

Dark clouds seem to hang above Mac's head anytime fractions were involved.

Not so for Ms. Spritski. Math made his teacher feel good, like dancing made Maya feel, or collecting clues made Lacey feel.

Every day Ms. Spritski reminded her students, “Math is all around us!” And she wasn’t talking about the math posters hanging on every wall in their classroom. She reminded them when she collected lunch money each morning to deliver to the cafeteria. And when they lined up in “two equal lines” to go to lunch. When the class groaned about math homework, she’d say, “Get to know math, and math will be your friend.”

Mac was trying to be friends with math. But right now, math equaled fractions. And they were not friendly. Right now, the math all around him was **Mental Agony Torturing Humans**.

Mac sighed and hurried back home. The sooner he got to Julian’s house, the sooner he’d get one of Julian’s chocolate chip cookies. At least he hoped he was going to get a whole cookie from the new batch, and not just a fraction of one.

After the homework and cookies were finished, Julian and Mac would meet up with their friends—their real friends—at the Little Free Library in the park.

He was wondering about the clues Lacey and Maya had to share as he walked back into his house.

In the kitchen, Mac's sister Sookie was searching deep in a bottom cupboard. She lifted her head and pointed at the counter. "You forgot to clean out your lunchbox."

*Stink bug x 2!* Mac trudged to the sink.

"It's your turn to set the table tonight." Sookie's head was inside the cupboard again, but Mac heard her just fine. "Dad's out of town, but Mom invited Miss Lynne for dinner."

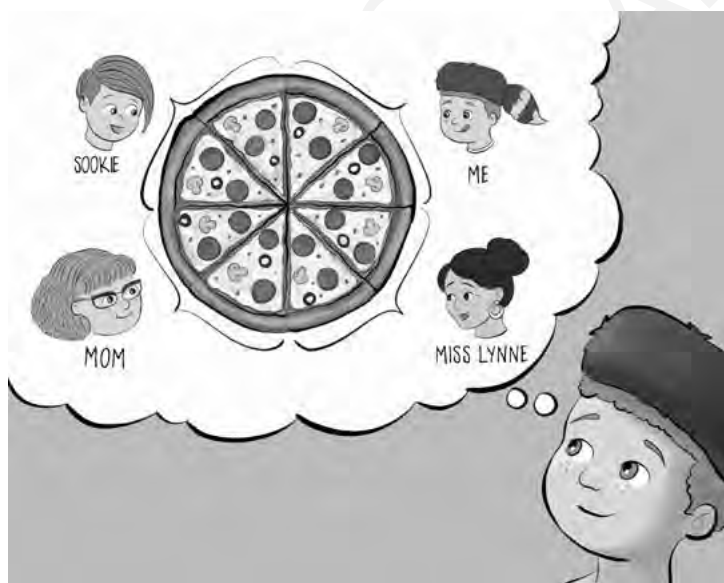
"Mom says homework first," Mac reminded his sister. He fished inside his backpack. "What are we having for dinner, anyway?"

Sookie's head popped up. "Roasted vegetables and rice," she answered. "If I can find

the roasting pan, that is.”

Mac’s nose wrinkled. “Maybe you should give up looking for the pan and do *your* homework,” Mac suggested. “We could always order a pizza from Buzzy’s.”

“Hmmm.” Sookie rocked back on her heels. “We could order the large pie. Do you think eight slices would be enough?”



“There will be four of us, so that’s two pieces each.” Mac pictured Buzzy’s steaming cheesy



pizza. Then Ms. Spritski's plastic pizza came to mind. They would each get  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the pizza.

Sookie stood and brushed off her knees. "I'll text Mom and see what she says. I can make a salad with the veggies."

Mac didn't answer. He was on his way out the door. He wanted to get to Julian's house while his brain was still warmed up. He had just figured out a fraction! Mac smiled and tugged on his cap. He was feeling good.

Book 3  
Chapter Sixteen

## Clue Review

**T**he Cayuga Island Kids gathered around the Little Free Library.

While Pesky nosed the grass, Lacey opened the sharing notebook to the page with the messy message.

They agreed with Maya. The kitty drawing was cute.

“Those Pet Care Adventure books were as good as buttered toast,” Yoko recalled. “The kitten in the story looked so soft and fluffy.” She gave herself a hug. “I just wanted to reach inside the book and snuggle it.”

“Why is the message so blurry?” asked Mac. “Is that the mystery?”



“The messy message is not the mystery.” Lacey opened her notebook. “But it could be a clue.”

Maya explained the best way to use glitter pens. “Always remember to let the ink dry,” she warned.

Lacey clicked her pen and then clicked it again. “The main thing is that the mystery has to do with missing glitter pens.”

“We’re calling it the Make-and-Take Club Mystery because it all started in Ms. Choi’s after school craft club.” Maya figured that was important.

“What started in craft club?” Julian was looking for facts.

Lacey looked at Maya. After all, she was the witness. She had been there. “Will you explain what happened? The important details?” she asked.

So Maya did.

Afterwards, Lacey read from her notebook.

The Make-and-Take Club Mystery

\*\* What happened to the missing glitter pens??? \*\*

CLUES

Two glitter pens missing at the end of the Make-and-Take Club meeting

Messy message in sharing notebook written with glitter pen (Maybe person hasn't used glitter pens much? Doesn't know to wait for ink to dry?)

Misspelled words in messy message: realy, luv, storry, kittys

The person who wrote the messy message drew a cat. The drawing could help us figure out who wrote the message.

The person really liked a book about pets.

Maya sighed. "I really want us to find those two missing glitter pens for Ms. Choi. Without

them, she will have to buy another whole set to be able to have two glitter pens for each kid.”

Yoko held her hands wide. “You’ve collected a slew of clues!”

“But will they lead to the missing glitter pens?” Julian wondered.

Lacey smiled. “There’s more.” She flipped the page in her notebook and turned to Maya again. “Tell them what happened at the scout meeting. The important parts.”

Meanwhile, Lacey checked her notes.

## SUSPECT

*The person who drew the cat in the sharing notebook (Taishi) was at the scout meeting.*

*We know Taishi drew the cat in the sharing notebook because she drew the same picture of a cat on a thank you note for the scout meeting guest (who brought two kittens).*

CLUES

Taishi is in Ms. Choi's Make-and-Take Club.

Kittys, luv-misspelled in the thank you note just like in the sharing notebook.

“Now we're onto something!” Mac didn't know much about glitter pens, but he was always ready to solve a mystery with his friends. “You have a kitty drawing match!”

“And a misspelled words match.” Yoko's eyebrows bounced above her sunglasses.

“Another important fact...” Julian tapped Lacey's notebook. “The clues lead to a suspect who was at the scene of the crime.”

“We are Fact Detectives!” Lacey exclaimed.

Pesky wagged his tail at the sparkle in Lacey's voice. The friends cheered. Everyone except Maya.

She was quiet. And she wasn't pointing her toes or practicing a new dance step.

That was a due.

Book 3  
Chapter Seventeen

# Important?

**S**omething was bothering Maya. “The clues point to Taishi as the person who wrote the message in the sharing notebook. But that doesn’t mean she took the glitter pens.” Maya’s eyes met Lacey’s. “Remember what Ms. Choi said. Glitter pens are common. Lots of people have them.” She looked from friend to friend. “Are we jumping to conclusions?” she asked.

Before anyone could answer, Mr. Esposito chugged up the path in his golf cart-turned-gardening cart. Rakes of different sizes rattled in the back. His brakes groaned as he pulled to a stop and hopped out.



Pesky wiggled and wagged until Mr. Esposito bent to give him a pat. Then he sat and wiggled and wagged while Mr. Esposito fished a dog treat from one of the pockets in his gardener's apron.

“When I was raking here earlier I found something on the ground.” Mr. Esposito patted the other apron pockets. “Too many pockets,” he mumbled. Finally, he pulled out a wide purple headband decorated with sparkly beads. “I’m afraid it’s a bit muddy from the rain last night.”



“Is that yours?” Julian asked Maya. It was a fact that purple was her favorite color.

Maya shook her head. “It’s not mine. But I’m pretty sure I know who it belongs to.” She paused. “Taishi was wearing a headband just like this at Make-and-Take Club.”

“Would you like to return it to her?” Mr. Esposito asked.

Maya accepted the headband from Mr. Esposito. She held it by its edges, careful not to rub the smudges of dirt. She knew from her mom that you had to be patient. Let mud dry, and ballet shoes are much easier to clean. She figured it was the same for headbands.

Mac tugged on his cap. “Another clue!”

Lacey was already writing in her notebook.

“Clue?” repeated Mr. Esposito.

“We’re working on another mystery.” Yoko tapped the side of her head to gesture that they were thinking.

“Something’s missing,” said Julian. “Actually

two things.” He liked to stick to the facts.

Mr. Esposito tipped his cap. “I’m confident you will solve the mystery. Is there anything I can do to help?”

Lacey pointed to the headband. “You already did. You found evidence.”

Mr. Esposito dug around in his apron pockets for another treat for Pesky before he drove off.

Suddenly, Maya gasped. She rose onto her toes and then sank into her heels. “The aprons!” she exclaimed.

“Aprons?” Mac repeated.

“We wear aprons in Make-and-Take Club!” Maya held her hands to her cheeks.

“You make snacks in Make-and-Take Club?”

“Craft aprons,” Maya clarified. “The kids wear aprons so they don’t get glue or paint or marker on their clothes. They put them on at the start of the meeting and hang them on the hooks

at the end.”

“Is that important?” asked Lacey.

“I don’t know.” Maya shoulders drooped.

Yoko patted Maya on the back. She knew that gesture between friends could help.

“When I saw Mr. Esposito searching through his apron pockets, I remembered. Ms. Choi looked in her pockets for the missing glitter pens. But we didn’t check the kids’ aprons.”

“They have pockets, too?” asked Julian.

Maya nodded, her eyes wide.

Lacey paged through her notes. “We have clues. We have evidence. It all points to Taishi.” She frowned and fingered her notebook. “But maybe,” she said slowly, “we don’t have all the facts.”

Lacey slid the notebook in her pocket. “Let’s see what we find out at Make-and-Take Club tomorrow.”

Book 3

Chapter Eighteen

# Fraction of the Truth

**M**ac was eager for his turn at Supper Share. Each night at the dinner table, everyone shared something they had learned that day. Often, Mac had to dive deep into his brain for a clue about what to share. But not tonight. He would talk about the Make-and-Take Club Mystery.

Miss Lynne arrived with a large pot of spaghetti with red sauce just as Mac's mom was placing the pizza and salad on the table. "An Italian Feast!" she declared.



Sookie began Supper Share by explaining what she had learned about black holes. Sookie loved science as much as Julian did, and ever since school started, she had shared a fact from class at the dinner table.

Meanwhile, Mac eyed the pizza. He zeroed in on the piece he was hoping for. It was loaded with cheese bubbles. He picked and poked at his salad. He pushed the carrot slices beneath the biggest piece of lettuce and then smooshed the

leaf flat. There was not a clue that carrots were hiding there. He ate the tiny tomatoes, though. They were sweet and juicy and that's why they were his favorite vegetable.

Mom shared next. She told a joke she had heard on the radio. While everyone laughed, she passed the pizza around the table.

Mac slid the piece of pizza he had eyed onto his plate. He was eager for his turn at Supper Share. But he really wanted to eat his pizza while it was still warm and gooey. "You can go before me, Miss Lynne," he offered.

"No, no!" Miss Lynne waved her hand. "I want to wait until everyone has had a chance to taste my sauce. I promised your mom I'd reveal my secret ingredient." She leaned over the pasta bowl and inhaled. "It's something that's often missing from spaghetti sauce."

"Mysterious," said Mac. "Like the Make-and-Take Club Mystery." He took a bite of pizza. Buzzy's was the best!

“Tell us,” Sookie prompted.

Mac described the messy message in the Little Free Library sharing notebook. He recounted the clues Lacey and Maya had collected. When Mac told them about Taishi’s thank you note at the scout meeting, Miss Lynne nodded. She had been there, of course. Finally, Mac mentioned the headband Mr. Esposito found in the park. “It’s evidence!” he said.

“That’s impressive detective work,” Miss Lynne commented. “And I’m glad to know you’re calling Taishi a *suspect*.”

Mac was confused. *Why was Miss Lynne glad Taishi was a suspect?*

Miss Lynne seemed to read Mac’s mind. “You have information—or clues. It’s likely that Taishi wrote the note in the sharing notebook.” She paused.

“But you don’t know for sure,” Sookie piped up.

“I was getting to that.” Mac made a scrunchy face at Sookie.



His mom pinned him with her eyes.

“More importantly,” Miss Lynne continued, “you’re missing facts that *prove* Taishi took Ms. Choi’s glitter pens.”

“That’s what Maya said,” Mac admitted. “Tomorrow at the Make-and-Take Club meeting, Maya and Lacey are going to check something.”

“Sounds mysterious,” Sookie said. “Tell us.”

“You’ll have to wait until Supper Share tomorrow night to find out,” Mac answered, and when his mother wasn’t looking he crossed his eyes at his sister.

Miss Lynne scooped pasta onto everyone’s plate. “Gathering all the facts—instead of just a fraction of the truth—is smart. And it’s the right thing to do.”

Mac thought back to Maddie’s fraction of the truth about flour bugs and Mrs. Schieber’s fraction of the truth about Champlain being the first to see Niagara Falls. Both had blurred the truth.

He twirled the pasta onto his fork and took a bite. The sauce was sweet and fresh. Instantly, he forgot about fractions, and about not talking with his mouth full. "This is really, really good," he murmured.

"Yum!" Sookie agreed.

"Delish!" Mac's mom leaned across the table toward their neighbor. "So what's the secret ingredient?"

Miss Lynne held her hand to her mouth as if she were sharing a secret. "Shredded carrots," she said.

Book 3

Chapter Nineteen

# Mystery Solved

**A**fter school, Lacey helped Maya carry the rocks to Ms. Choi's room. Maya had chosen only those she thought would be perfect to decorate. But she had collected plenty.

"Hello, my friends!" Ms. Choi greeted the girls. When Maya showed her all the shapes and sizes of the rocks, she smiled. "I know I can always count on you."

Ms. Choi reached for her supply list. "Lacey, would you please get the paints and brushes from the storage closet?"

Lacey opened the tall double doors. On the

shelf in front of her was the glitter pen tray with two pens missing.

“We have more clues,” she told Ms. Choi. “About the missing glitter pens.”

Ms. Choi looked up from the rocks she and Maya were arranging on the table.

“We have evidence,” Lacey added. “It points to a suspect.”

Maya eyed the row of aprons. “But we want to check something first.”

Just then three of the young crafters entered the room. Two were holding hands and the third led the way in his wheelchair. One of the kids was Taishi.

When she spotted Maya and Lacey, she skipped across the room. “Hi! Remember me?”

Maya unzipped her backpack and pulled out the purple beaded headband. It was clean, with just one tiny mark on the underside. “Is this yours?” she asked.

Taishi's bubbly laugh filled the room as she took the headband from Maya. "I thought it was lost forever!" She held it to her chest. "Where did you find it?" she asked.



"In the park by the Little Free Library," Lacey said.

"I love the Little Free Library!" Taishi placed the beaded headband beside the purple-striped one already on her head. "These match

the purple craft apron,” she said, eyeing the hooks holding the aprons. “That one’s my favorite.”

Lacey knew Maya was eager to check the aprons. But she had to know. “Did you write a message in the Little Free Library sharing notebook?” she blurted.

“Yes!” Taishi said. “I borrowed the pet care adventure books. I finished the one about chickens, and now I’m reading one about a hamster. But the book about the kitty is my favorite.” She paused. “I love kitties. But we can’t have one because my brother is allergic.”

“I remember you us told that,” said Maya. “I have a cat. Maybe someday you could come over. Her name is Sparky, and she likes purple as much as we do!” Maya hesitated and looked at Lacey. Taishi didn’t act guilty when they mentioned the Little Free Library sharing notebook. Should they ask her about the glitter pen she used to write the message?

Meanwhile, the rest of the Make-and-Take Club kids were gathering in the room. Ms. Choi signaled to Maya. “Could you please help with the aprons? Get our crafters settled?” she asked.

Taishi raced to grab the purple apron. Maya and Lacey followed. But it was too late to check the pockets of the aprons. The kids jumbled together, pulling aprons from the hooks.

A girl tugged on Maya’s arm. “Will you tie this for me?” she asked.

Lacey knelt to help another girl having trouble with a tight snap.

A boy stamped his foot. “This apron has a knot!”

Finally, all the kids were seated with their aprons tied, buttoned, or snapped. Ms. Choi held up her hand. It was the signal for “Quiet.”

She began to explain about kindness rocks when suddenly a boy at the last table shouted, “Ms. Choi! Look what I found in my apron pocket!”

He held up two glitter pens.





Book 3  
Chapter Twenty

# Kindness Rocks

**E**arly Saturday morning Julian waited for his friends beside the Little Free Library. It was cool, but the sun was shining through the brightly colored leaves.

Julian had been so busy with cookie recipes, fraction worksheets, and the explorer project that he hadn't had time to find answers to his questions about leaves changing color in the fall.

He was reading his tablet when Mac arrived. "Listen to this!" he said.

*"In the fall, chlorophyll in leaves breaks down. As this happens, other colors beside green come through. Leaves finally show their reds, yellows, and oranges—the colors that were always there in the first place."*

“So the colors hide until it’s time to make like a tree and leave.” Mac grinned when his friend rolled his eyes.

Julian looked across the park to the creek. “Science is all around us,” he said.

“You sound like Ms. Spritski talking about math,” said Mac. He reached inside his powder horn and pulled out a pack of puffy fish stickers. “Do you want half?” he asked and then he realized. That was math!

Soon, Lacey and Yoko arrived.

“I’ve memorized all the gestures on my wall chart.” Yoko pumped her fist. “I’m going to practice them all the way up until the day of the school play tryouts.”

“Practice on us,” Julian suggested. “After all, I practice cookie recipes on you.” He reached inside his backpack and offered a cookie to each of his friends.

Yoko made an “okay” gesture because her mouth was full of cookie.

So was Mac's. But he talked anyway. "These are the best ones so far!"

"Dad found a recipe from a woman who won a cookie contest. Her secret is rolling the cookies instead of spooning them onto the cookie sheet." He held his cookie up. "They brown on the outside and stay soft in the middle."

Yoko rubbed her stomach. She sighed deeply and closed her eyes.

"You like your cookie. Right?" A smile tugged at the corner of Julian's mouth.

"The only thing missing is the bugs," joked Mac.

He was brushing away crumbs when Maya skipped up the path. "Sorry I'm late!" She paused to catch her breath. "Taishi stopped by to meet Sparky. I never heard that cat purr so much! I told Taishi she can be Sparky's aunt. Then I showed her my craft drawer. I lost track of time."

Julian handed Maya a cookie. She held it to her nose to smell its goodness before she bit into it.

“I have books to donate!” Mrs. Schieber announced as she wheeled up on her bike. “Then I have to run. Saturday is errands day!”

Julian reached into his bag. He always packed an extra cookie. He offered it to Mrs. Schieber, and after one bite she declared it, “stupendous!” She asked Julian if he would share the recipe.

She placed her books in the Little Free Library and then plucked a biography from the shelf. Lacey recognized it as one Gram had donated.

“I’m looking forward to Monday when I find out what facts my research explorers have discovered,” said Mrs. Schieber.

“Me, too!” said Julian. He and Maddie had agreed to finish up their report tomorrow.

Mrs. Schieber was about to hop on her bike when her foot bumped against something nestled in the leaves. She reached down and picked it up. “Well, look at that!” she marveled. “A pretty rock that says, “Do your best. Forget the rest.”



“That’s a kindness rock,” said Maya. “You can keep it.”

“Kindness *rocks*.” Mrs. Schieber waited for the kids to get her play on words before heading down the path.

Maya finished her cookie and smacked her lips. “This is the best chocolate chip cookie ever,” she said.

“No need for further investigation?” asked Julian.

“Well,” said Mac, “we wouldn’t mind if you wanted to keep working on recipes.”

“I’m just happy we don’t need to keep working on The Make-and-Take Club Mystery,” said Maya. “Taishi didn’t take Ms. Choi’s glitter pens. And I’m glad.”

Lacey sighed. “The clues and evidence pointed to Taishi. But I didn’t have all the facts.”

“I’m working on making better cookies. You’re working on being a better fact detective,” said Julian, nudging Lacey’s shoulder.

“I’m working on being better friends with math,” said Mac.

Yoko lifted her hand to her forehead and wiped away imaginary sweat. “We’re all working on something,” she said.

Maya tucked her arm through Lacey’s. “Do your best. Forget the rest.”

Lacey liked that. “I’ll do my best not to jump to conclusions,” she vowed.

“Speaking of jumping...” Mac pointed to the rocks by the creek. “Adventures await!”



The Cayuga Island Kids played in the park for the rest of the day. They hopped across the rocks by the creek. Julian gathered leaves for an experiment. Maya gathered some, too, for a placemat craft. Pesky just chased the leaves.

Yoko practiced acting happy, sad, confused, and sleepy. She used gestures and her friends guessed her feelings. Lacey declared she was giving excellent clues.

As the sun dipped behind the trees, the Cayuga Island Kids set off for home. On the way, they passed the Little Free Library. Maya remembered the pen strap tucked in her pocket. She had made it from purple ribbon. Ms. Choi had shown her the perfect way to secure the pen to the sharing notebook.

When Maya unlatched the library door, she discovered something resting on the shelf.





Turn the page to see a photo of  
the real Pesky and to find the  
Story Behind the Story of

**The  
Cayuga Island  
Kids  
Series**



# The Story Behind the Story



Although the Cayuga Island Kids series is fictional, many aspects of the stories come from real life.

The **setting**, or where the Cayuga Island Kids series takes place, is real. The island is located a few miles upstream from the mighty Niagara Falls. I grew up there, and my observations, along with memories, helped me form ideas for the stories in this series.

The **characters** in the Cayuga Island Kids series are **fictional**. They are not real children

or adults. However, my characters are based on people I know or have observed. My brother inspired Mac.



The author's brother Anthony, age 7

Pesky is based on a dog named Genna.



Genna, 2020

My cousin is a college professor and an excellent cook. She inspired Miss Lynne. Mrs. Schieber is based on a friend. She is not a librarian, but she loves to read, research, and bake. There's also a bit of me in every character. Check out the photo from when I was about the

age of the Cayuga Island Kids. Does this remind you of anyone?



The author, age 8

The events in this story came from my imagination. The ideas, however, came from my interests, observations, and experiences:

- I am a big fan and supporter of **Little Free Libraries**. These community libraries can be found in neighborhoods everywhere. Readers may take and also give books. I am always on the lookout for Little Free Libraries when I travel, and I have discovered many creative free libraries. I even found one in a tiny restaurant in Torino, Italy!



Little library in a restaurant in Torino, Italy, 2018

A collection of photos of LFLs can be found on my website in the FAQ section. You can build a Little Free Library for your front yard or anywhere people will find it. Be creative! For more information, visit [littlefreelibrary.org](http://littlefreelibrary.org).

- During the Covid-19 pandemic, **kindness rocks** became a way for people to lift the spirits of others in their neighborhood or community. While I was writing this story in the midst of the pandemic, I found a kindness rock under a tree in my front yard.

Later, a kindness rock was placed in one of the Little Free Libraries for which I provide books. What's funny is that it was found *after* I had written the scene where the kindness rock is discovered in the LFL in Cayuga Island Park!



Kindness rock found in a Little Free Library

- During the time I was writing this book, I became curious about **misinformation** and **disinformation**. When I am interested in something, I try to learn as much as I can about it. So I attended webinars, read books, sifted through articles, and thought about how the Cayuga Island Kids could face and deal with information that blurs the



truth, or gives only some of the facts. Just because something appears in print or on the internet doesn't mean it's factual. When you hear or read something, determine if it's true before you repeat it. Being a fact detective is important.

- The chocolate chip cookie recipe that follows is a tasty fact. It is the creation of my friend, Mary Beth. When I was writing this story, I needed a recipe for Julian to try that would top all the others. I love to cook, but I am not a baker like Julian. I am more a taster like Julian's friends, and Mary Beth's cookies are the BEST. I requested her secret recipe as I was writing the ending of this story, and she gave me permission to share it with you.

Do you want to learn more about misinformation, disinformation, Little Free Libraries, flour bugs, or cookie variables? Do you want to know how to craft a kindness rock? Are

you curious about gestures and facial expressions? I learned about all of these things and more as I wrote this book. Research is fun! Investigate topics that spark your interest in your school or public library and on safe online sites, just as the Cayuga Island Kids do. Be a fact detective. Always check more than one source. Make sure information is accurate.

Adventures await! Be curious, like the Cayuga Island Kids. And above all, be kind and be a good friend.

*Find Activities and an Educator's Guide for this book  
and others in the Cayuga Island Kids series at  
**www.judybradbury.com**  
and on **www.CityofLightPublishing.com**.*

# Mary Beth's Magnificent Chocolate Chip Cookies



## ingredients

- 4 sticks salted butter (room temperature, not melted)
- 1 ½ cups white sugar
- 1 ½ cups light brown sugar
- 4 eggs lightly beaten
- 4 teaspoons vanilla extract (do not use imitation vanilla)
- 5 ½ cups flour (loosely scooped, not packed)
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 36 ounces semisweet chocolate chips

## other

- Use convection oven, if available
- Bake on parchment paper
- Makes about 36 good-sized cookies

**Happy Baking!**  
**Be sure to have  
an adult help you.**

## steps

1. Cream softened (room temperature) butter. It should cream easily.
2. Add white and light brown sugar and mix until smooth.
3. Mix in eggs and vanilla.
4. Add flour, baking soda, and salt; mix well. You may mix with (clean!) hands.
5. Gently add chocolate chips either with a spatula or with your hands.
6. Roll the cookie dough into balls. This helps keep the center soft.  
*\*This is the secret to making magnificent chocolate chip cookies!*
7. Place on parchment paper on cookie sheets. (Parchment paper is key!) The dough will not spread much when baking.
8. Bake in a convection oven, if available, at 375 degrees Fahrenheit for 10-11 minutes. Baking time will vary in a conventional oven. Cookies will continue to harden as they set. Don't overbake, especially if you like cookies with a soft center.



## Meet the Author

Judy Bradbury is an author, an award-winning literacy advocate and educator, and host of the popular Children's Book Corner blog. She is also a Cayuga Island Kid. Judy grew up on the island, which is located just a few miles upstream from the mighty Niagara Falls. In the summers, she rode the bicycle her father built for her across the island in search of mysteries to solve. Judy loves visiting schools and libraries to share her books with students, and frequently offers writing workshops.

## Meet the Illustrator

Although she has always loved to draw, Gabriella Vagnoli became an illustrator via a circuitous route that allowed her to explore many other interests including theater, music, teaching, and languages. Her work in these fields all had a common thread: communication. And this is what she loves best about illustrating children's books—the opportunity to visually communicate a story in a way that will indelibly imprint it on young minds, just as she still has with her the illustrated stories from her childhood in Italy.



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