



*The Curious League
of Detectives and Thieves*
Book 2: S.O.S.

by **Tom Phillips**

“Soaring, silly, and stocked with detectives
and criminal masterminds.” —Kirkus Reviews

ABOUT THE BOOK

Take to the skies in the side-splitting second installment of a middle grade mystery series for fans of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* and *Enola Holmes*.

Fresh off recovering a billion-dollar ruby and losing the criminal who stole it, John Boarhog and Inspector Toadius McGee are soaring high on a new adventure! Hoping to intercept the Mauve Moth before they execute their next great heist, Toadius and John book passage on the H.M.R.A.S. *Bouteille*—a luxury cruise liner airship. But alas, there will be no clear skies ahead. A committee from the Society of Sleuths (S.O.S.)

is also aboard, ready to put John through his first trial to gain full membership, despite Toadius’s objections. Furious with his mentor, John falls in with the Hive, a group of kids obsessed with using social media for fame. They see how valuable he is, even if Toadius doesn’t. But when both the Mauve Moth and Shim-Sham resurface, each with their own nefarious aims, will the detective duo be able to see past their disagreements to, once again, save the day?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Who is telling the story? How does the point of view add to the mystery, intrigue, and adventure of the novel? Explain the following statement at the end of the prologue: “And I will warn you, dear reader . . . not everything is as it appears” (p. VIII). To what events in the story is the storyteller referencing?
- In chapter one, the storyteller refers to a robbery of “last year’s Thanksgiving Day Parade balloons” (p. 1). At what point in the novel do the balloons reappear? What role do they play in the overall plot? What do the trunks that are loaded on the ship foreshadow? Explain how they figure into the mystery.

- Polly “Pickles” Cronopolis is known as the Mauve Moth. Why is she considered a criminal mastermind? Shim-Sham, a monkey, is also a criminal. Discuss the prison metaphor of the Central Park Zoo. Explain the bag of flour found in Shim-Sham’s cell at the zoo. How are Pickles and Shim-Sham the subject of the mystery to be solved? Explain the role of the following characters: the Great Goatinee, Abra K. Dabra, Madam Dorset-Horne and Falcon, and Captain Cloudhopper.
- Describe the airship, the *Bouteille*. How does this setting add to the danger and intrigue of the plot?
- S.O.S. is the Society of Sleuths. What are the rules of membership? Describe the trials that John must master before becoming a member of the S.O.S. Explain why Commissioner Boxelder is concerned about inducting a child into the society. Cite evidence that Toadius worries that John isn’t ready for membership. What are John’s missteps? How do these errors almost cost him membership in the society?
- Discuss the case that John is handed. What is at stake if he fails? Explain why he is so anxious to please Toadius. What does Toadius mean when he says that John has a “heart”? How does this characteristic contribute to John’s success as a detective?
- Toadius reminds John of Rule Number Six: crime scenes can’t keep quiet. How does John learn to smell, listen, and feel the room for things that shouldn’t be there? Discuss Toadius’s other rules for sleuthing. What happens when John forgets the rules?
- Why does Toadius want John to meet kids his own age? Describe John’s interaction with the Hive. Explain what Toadius means when he tells John, “Be very wary of pirates” (p. 81). Debate whether Toadius thinks Dirk and the Hive are “pirates.” Discuss John’s friendship with Wembley Danger Quokkas. What does John learn about being a friend? Discuss Wembley’s moms’ reaction to the friendship between the boys.
- Why does Toadius give John his diary to read? What does John learn? Discuss John’s emotions at the end of the novel when he and Toadius are separated. How might this foreshadow the next adventure for John?

Check out the series!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo Credit: Bella Saville

Tom Phillips grew up with a passion for storytelling, despite a lifelong struggle with dyslexia. He writes books that kids can enjoy on their own, but also read aloud and share. He’s had a long career as a writer and artist for clients such as LeVar Burton Kids, HBO, Disney, and ABC. *The Curious League of Detectives and Thieves* is his first book series. An armchair Sherlockian, Tom lives in Los Angeles with his lovely wife and his dog, Dr. Watson. Visit him online at TomPhillipsWriter.com