



Hershy and the Mystery Smell

Ages 6-9
A story and 9 activities



Hershy and the Mystery Smell

Something smells strange in the playroom.

Hershy notices it as soon as he walks in after school. It isn't a terrible smell, but it isn't a good one either. It is sour and a little sweet, like old fruit.

"Do you smell that?" he asks his sister Chani.

She sniffs. "Yes. What is it?"

"I don't know. Let's find out."

Hershy takes out a small notebook and writes at the top: The Mystery Smell. Then he draws a line down the middle. On the left, he writes Clues. On the right, he writes Ideas.

"First, where is it strongest?" he says.

They walk slowly around the room, noses up. By the bookshelf, it is faint. By the window, it is fainter. By the toy chest in the corner, it is strongest.

"Clue one," says Hershy, writing. "Toy chest."

Chani lifts the lid. Blocks, a stuffed giraffe, a jump rope. But no smell source.

"Maybe it's under the toys," says Hershy.

They take everything out. At the very bottom, wedged into a corner, is a small brown paper bag.

"What's that?"

Hershy opens it carefully. Inside is a banana, so brown and soft that it has gone nearly black.

"Ewww!" says Chani, laughing and holding her nose.

"Mystery solved," says Hershy, grinning. He writes: Answer: a very old banana.

"But how did it get there?" asks Chani.

"That's a new mystery."

They think. Hershy remembers that three weeks ago, before the Yom Tov break, he packed a banana for school, and then Mommy called him for the car. He must have dropped it into the chest instead of his bag.

"It was me," he says. "I forgot it."

"Are you in trouble?"

"No. It's just a banana." He picks up the bag with two fingers and carries it to the garbage. Then they open the window, and the fresh air blows the smell away.

Mommy comes in. "What are you two doing?"

"We solved a mystery," says Hershy. He shows her the notebook.

"Very impressive. You didn't panic, and you didn't blame anyone."

"We just looked for clues."

"That's the way to do it," says Mommy. "When something puzzles you, you can look carefully and ask questions."

Hershy feels proud. He closes the notebook and looks at the cover. The Mystery Smell. Case closed.

The next day at school, his friend Moishy complains about a rattling sound in his backpack. "I don't know what it is. It's driving me crazy."

"Let's investigate," says Hershy. "Where is it loudest?"

They look together, one pocket at a time. It turns out to be a loose pencil sharpener, rolling around in a front compartment. Moishy laughs so hard he nearly falls over.

Back in the playroom that evening, Hershy sets up a little shelf for the notebook, right beside the toy chest. "For the next mystery," he says. Chani says she hopes the next one will smell like cookies.

That week, Hershy starts a Mystery Notebook at home. His first page says: Look first. Guess second. He likes how it sounds. He reads it out loud to Chani, and they both decide they will make a good detective team.



Activity 1 of 9

Remember the story

1. What smells strange?

2. Where is the smell strongest?

3. What is the source?

4. What does Hershy write at the top of the notebook?



Activity 2 of 9

Fact or guess? (circle one)

1. Chani holds her nose and laughs. Fact / Guess
2. Hershy is punished for the banana. Fact / Guess
3. Moishy's rattle is a pencil sharpener. Fact / Guess
4. They open the window to air out the room. Fact / Guess



Activity 3 of 9

Think and write

1. How does Hershy stay calm about the smell?

2. What clues help solve the mystery?

3. What puzzle could you investigate?

Activity 4 of 9

Word search (find all 6)

Words: MYSTERY, BANANA, NOTEBOOK, CLUES, SMELL, WINDOW

V	V	A	H	H	T	R	N	T	G	W
M	W	N	J	R	J	I	Y	F	B	O
E	D	A	U	U	U	N	R	F	N	D
D	O	N	N	K	O	V	E	K	O	N
P	R	A	N	G	H	V	T	I	T	I
U	F	B	C	V	Y	B	S	Y	E	W
T	S	W	M	L	C	Y	Y	F	B	G
R	N	M	L	K	U	P	M	S	O	D
I	J	J	E	C	H	E	D	D	O	S
O	G	E	Y	L	K	A	S	E	K	R
V	U	D	S	K	L	R	I	D	R	K



Activity 5 of 9

Scrambled words (from the story)

1. RYSMTYE = _____

2. ANBNAA = _____

3. NOTOEKOB = _____

4. FFIRAEG = _____

5. IDOWNW = _____



Activity 6 of 9

Say it out loud

Practice each line in a calm, steady voice:

"Let's look for clues first."

"Where is it strongest?"

"I'll guess second."



Activity 7 of 9

My chart

My Mystery Chart

#	The puzzle	Clues I found	The answer
Mystery 1			
Mystery 2			
Mystery 3			



Activity 8 of 9

Draw it

Draw the toy chest with the brown paper bag and the very old banana.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to draw the toy chest, brown paper bag, and very old banana.



Activity 9 of 9

Answers

Remember the story:

1. The playroom
2. By the toy chest
3. An old brown banana
4. The Mystery Smell

Fact or guess: 1 Fact; 2 Guess; 3 Fact; 4 Fact

Scrambled words: MYSTERY, BANANA, NOTEBOOK, GIRAFFE, WINDOW

Think and write: answers will vary; talk them over together.