

“A Mystery”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

Directions: Read the story. Then answer the questions below.



“Something is very wrong,” says the detective.

“I know!” says Ms. Gervis. “It is wrong that someone has stolen from me!”

The detective looks around Ms. Gervis’ apartment. “That is not what I am talking about, ma’am. What is wrong is that I do not understand how the robber got in and out.”

Ms. Gervis and the detective stand in silence. Ms. Gervis’ eyes are full of tears. Her hands are shaking.

“The robber did not come through the window,” says the detective. “These windows have not been opened or shut in months.”

The detective looks at the fireplace. “The robber did not squeeze down here.”

The detective walks to the front door. He examines the latch. “And since there are no marks or scratches, the robber **definitely** did not try to break the lock.”

“I have no idea how he did it,” says a bothered Ms. Gervis. “It is a big **mystery**.”

“And you say the robber stole nothing else?” asks the detective. “No money, no jewelry, no crystal?”

“That’s right, detective. He took only what was important to me,” Ms. Gervis says with a sigh. “There is only one thing I can do now.”

“And what is that?” the detective asks with surprise.

“I will stop baking cakes,” Ms. Gervis says. “They are mine to give away. They are not for someone to steal.”

“You can’t do that!” says the detective with **alarm**. “Who will bake those delicious cakes?”

“I am sorry. I do not know,” says Ms. Gervis.

“I must solve this case **immediately!**” says the detective.

Questions:

- 1) Where does this story take place?
- A. in a bakery
 - B. at the police station
 - C. in Ms. Gervis' house
 - D. in Ms. Gervis' apartment
- 2) Near the beginning of the story, "Ms. Gervis' eyes are full of tears. Her hands are shaking." How does Ms. Gervis probably feel?
- A. She is upset.
 - B. She is tired.
 - C. She is hungry.
 - D. She is confused.
- 3) What makes the detective sure that the robber did not come through the windows?
- A. The windows are locked.
 - B. The windows face the police station.
 - C. The windows have not been used in months.
 - D. The windows are too small for a person to fit through.
- 4) "And the robber **definitely** did not use the front door." Which is the best way to rewrite this sentence?
- A. "And the robber may not have used the front door."
 - B. "And the robber probably did not use the front door."
 - C. "And the robber was not able to use the front door."
 - D. "And the robber certainly did not use the front door."
- 5) What else could the detective have asked Ms. Gervis in order to solve the mystery?
- I. Which types of cakes does Ms. Gervis know how to bake?
 - II. Does someone else have a key to the apartment?
 - III. Does Ms. Gervis ever leave the door unlocked?
- A. I only
 - B. I and II
 - C. II and III
 - D. I, II, and III
- 6) What does Ms. Gervis do with her cakes?
- A. She eats them.
 - B. She sells them.
 - C. She hides them.
 - D. She gives them away.
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Answers and Explanations

1) **D**

Near the beginning of the story, “the detective looks around Ms. Gervis’ apartment.” We can understand from this that the story takes place in Ms. Gervis’ apartment. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Ms. Gervis’ cake was stolen, but it was stolen from her apartment, not a bakery. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Detectives work at the police station, but the detective was investigating at Ms. Gervis’ apartment. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. Ms. Gervis has an apartment, not a house. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

2) **A**

The detective is at Ms. Gervis’ apartment because Ms. Gervis has been robbed. In fact, the robber took “only what was important” to Ms. Gervis. Since Ms. Gervis’ apartment has been robbed and the robber took something important to her, we can understand that Ms. Gervis is upset. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

The story does not provide information to support answer choices **(B)** and **(C)**. Therefore they are incorrect. Ms. Gervis does not know how someone got into her apartment, but she is shaking and crying because she has been robbed, not because she is confused. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

3) **C**

In the middle of the story, the detective says, “The robber did not come through the windows.” Then the detective says, “These windows have not been opened or shut in months.” We can understand from these statements that the detective believes that the robber didn’t come through the windows because the windows had not been used in months. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

The story does not provide information to support answer choices **(A)**, **(B)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

4) **D**

definitely (*adjective*): certainly; without doubt.

In the middle of the story, the detective examines the latch on the door. The detective says, “Since there are no marks or scratches, the robber *definitely* did not try to break the lock.” The reader can understand from this that since there is no evidence that someone tried to break the lock, someone certainly did not try to break the lock. *Certainly* is another way to say definitely. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Definitely means certainly, but something that *may not* happen is uncertain. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Since *probably* means that something could happen but might not, it is not certain. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. When

someone is not able to do something, they cannot do that thing. But when someone *definitely* can do something, they are certain to do it. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

5) **C**

The detective determined that the robber did not come in through the windows or the fireplace. Also, the robber did not try to break the lock on the door. Therefore, the mystery here is how someone got into the apartment to steal the cake. Knowing what kinds of cakes Ms. Gervis can bake will not help the detective determine how someone got in the apartment. This eliminates **option (I)**. Knowing whether someone else had a key could help the detective find possible suspects, because someone with a key could get in the apartment without breaking the lock. This supports **option (II)**. If Ms. Gervis left the door unlocked, someone could also have come in without breaking the lock. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

6) **D**

Near the end of the story, Ms. Gervis says that she will stop baking cakes: "They are mine to give away. They are not for someone to steal." We can understand from this that Ms. Gervis gives her cakes away. Therefore **(D)** is correct. The story does not provide information to support answer choices **(A)**, **(B)**, and **(C)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

7) **A**

Near the end of the story, Ms. Gervis says that she will stop baking cakes. This makes the detective alarmed. The detective wonders, "Who will bake those delicious cakes?" Then, the detective decides to "solve this case immediately!" We can understand from this that the detective wants to solve the case immediately because he thinks that Ms. Gervis will bake cakes again if the case is solved. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

Ms. Gervis has simply said she will no longer bake cakes because they are not made to be stolen. She does not offer extra cakes for solving the mystery. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The story does not provide information to support answer choices **(C)** and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

8) **D**

mystery (*noun*): an unexplained event; something that is not fully understood.

In this story, the detective is trying to figure out how a robber got into an apartment. The detective notices that the robber did not come in through a window, through the fireplace, or break the lock to the door. Ms. Gervis says that how the robber got in is a big *mystery*. Since the detective has looked at all the normal ways that someone may have gotten into the apartment and ruled them out, a mystery must be something that is hard to figure out or explain. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Something that is *wrong* is incorrect. A mystery is hard to figure out, but it is not incorrect. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Robbers often break in at night, but this story does not give that information. More importantly, a mystery is something hard to explain. This could happen at any time. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The story does not provide information about something the robber left behind. Again, a mystery is something hard to explain. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

9) **D**

In the middle of the story, the detective asks Ms. Gervis if the robber stole anything else: “No money, no jewelry, no crystal?” Ms. Gervis says, “That’s right, detective.” Ms. Gervis goes on to say that the robber has taken the only thing that is important to her, and that now she will stop baking cakes. We can understand from this that the only thing that the robber stole was cake. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Ms. Gervis agreed that the robber did not take crystal **(A)**, jewelry **(B)**, or money **(C)**. Therefore these answer choices are incorrect.

10) **A**

alarm (*noun*): fear or terror aroused by awareness of danger.

When Ms. Gervis says that she will no longer bake cakes, the detective reacts with *alarm*. The detective says he will “solve the case immediately!” The reader can understand from this that the detective is very afraid that Ms. Gervis will not bake her delicious cakes if the he does not solve the case. Alarm is fear or terror. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

Bells and whistles is a phrase that means with all the little extras, such as a new car that comes with all the special features. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The detective is afraid that there will be no more delicious cakes. This does not make the detective happy, so *alarm* is not *smiles and laughter*. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. The detective is worried that there will be no more cake, but he is not sad about it—he is ready to solve the case. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.