

# The Case of the Missing Magazines

by RV staff writer

Melia and her father had just finished building a tree house in the backyard. Melia, an artist, wanted to decorate the walls, and instead of buying things, she decided to make her own art.

Melia enjoyed making collages using a combination of photos she had taken and pieces of fabric. For her tree house, she thought she would use pictures from magazines instead. She could collect used magazines from neighbors, so the pictures would be free. And to create a collage of all her favorite things, she could add pretty leaves, moss, and pine cones from the yard.

For several days, Melia collected bits of nature to use for the collage. She also collected magazines from the neighbors. She stacked both on the front porch, as her plan was to make the collage over the weekend. Oddly, though, when she added to the piles each day, many of the sticks and leaves were gone, and the pile of magazines was a mess.

“Dad? Mom?” Melia asked. “Have either of you been taking the supplies for my collage off the porch?”

“Now, why on Earth would we do that?” her dad answered with a question.

“I don’t know, but what I do know is that someone is spoiling my art project! It’s my mission to find out who and why!” Melia declared.

*Who would want to steal this stuff?* She had a plan. She cleaned up the rest of the leaves and tossed the ruined magazines in the recycling bin. She started collecting old magazines again, hoping to set a trap for the bandit. Even if she had to stay up all night, Melia was determined to solve the case.

Once she had collected a large stack of magazines, Melia formed several piles on the front porch. She placed them close to the window so that she could catch the thief. She asked her parents if she could sleep on the sofa. “I know they’re used magazines, but I need them for my art project. I have to solve this case!”

Melia was determined to catch the bandit, but she had a difficult time staying awake. Within a few hours, she had nodded off. Just as the sun was rising, a slight scratching sound awoke her.

Melia peeked out the window, and her eyes opened wide! A squirrel was toppling the piles of magazines and using its paws to rip out pages. It stuffed the paper in its mouth and scurried away. Then, a few minutes later, it was back again to collect more paper!

Melia tiptoed outside and watched as the squirrel made its third run. She followed the furry creature up the tree and into the tree house. Torn magazine paper, shredded bark, and dry leaves littered the floor.

A box that Melia planned to store her snacks in was slowly being transformed into a squirrel house! Melia ran back into the house, shouting, "It's a squirrel! It's a squirrel! Wake up! Come and look!"

Although Melia's parents thought the squirrel was cute, having a wild animal in the tree house was not a good idea. They relocated the box nearby so that Melia could watch the squirrel build its nest from a safe place in her tree house.

"Case closed," Melia said, feeling brilliant about solving this case and looking forward to her next mystery to solve.

**Questions**

1. What do the tree house and Melia's interest in art tell you about her?
2. Why does Melia stack the newspapers in front of the windows?
3. In what way are Melia and the squirrel alike?
4. What happens when Melia finds out the identity of the bandit? Why do you think she wants to solve more mysteries?

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**Vocabulary List**

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. decorate
2. collages
3. bandit
4. scurried
5. creature
6. shredded
7. relocated
8. brilliant

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**Context Clues**

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) "Melia, an artist, wanted to **decorate** the walls"

a. dress up; make pretty   b. raise   c. cover   d. clean

2) "Melia enjoyed making **collages** using a combination of photos"

a. frames   b. magazines   c. dollhouses   d. paper crafts using glue

3) "She started collecting old magazines again, hoping to set a trap for the **bandit**"

a. mystery guest   b. small bird   c. thief   d. animal

4) "It stuffed the paper in its mouth and **scurried** away"

a. rolled   b. ran; scampered   c. flew   d. swallowed

5) "She followed the furry **creature**"

a. pet   b. paper trail   c. head   d. animal

6) "Torn magazine paper, **shredded** bark, and dry leaves littered the floor"

a. cut up   b. wooden   c. bumpy   d. wet

7) "They **relocated** the box nearby"

a. watched   b. cleaned   c. removed; took somewhere else   d. opened

8) "'Case closed,' Melia said, feeling **brilliant** about solving this case"

a. proud   b. smart   c. sad   d. happy