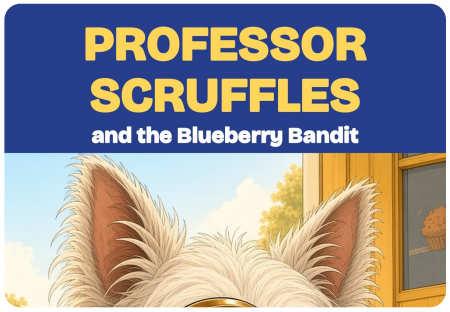


Professor Scruffles and the Blueberry Bandit

Case No. 1 | by Devin Dietrich | Teacher and Read-Aloud Guide

Grades 2-3 independent reading | K-4 read-aloud | Ages 6-9 | 10 short chapters

About the Book

Five mornings in a row, every blueberry muffin at the Sunrise Bakery in Puddle Creek has vanished. The back door locks itself, the spare key is missing, and the only clue is a tiny handprint in the flour. When nine-year-old Dixie clips a tweed bow tie onto her scruffy dog Otis, he becomes Professor Scruffles, a detective with a brilliant nose and some truly terrible theories. Together with Grandpa Lou, Dixie maps the clues, rules out suspects, and follows a trail of blue crumbs to a surprising, gentle answer. The story ends with a wildlife ranger explaining why people food is not good for wild animals.

Themes: careful observation, it is okay to be wrong, listening to others, kindness to suspects, respect for wildlife. **Skills:** sequencing clues, making and testing predictions, character traits, cause and effect.

Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion

1. **A Very Serious Emergency.** What two clues does Dixie write first? Why does the bow tie change Otis?
2. **The Nose Knows.** What is the Secret Bran Society? How does Dixie show it cannot be true?
3. **The Grumpy Mailman.** Why does the Professor suspect Mr. Grumbold? What does "grumpy outside, soft inside" mean?
4. **Biscuit Is Innocent.** Which two tests prove Biscuit did not do it? What new clue appears?
5. **A Thinking Snack.** Grandpa Lou tells a story nobody listens to. Why might it matter later?
6. **The Stakeout.** What two clues do they find? What went wrong at the most important moment?
7. **Mr. Grumbold Explains.** Why are his fingers blue? How does Dixie rule out Marmalade the cat?
8. **Blue Crumbs.** How does Dixie use a map to follow the trail? Where does it end?
9. **The Hollow in Old Knuckles.** How does each clue fit the answer? Why does Grandpa Lou say to look from far away?
10. **A Better Breakfast.** Was Clementine a bad guy? What should people do if they find a wild animal's home?

Clue-Tracking Sheet

Write each clue when you find it. Then predict who (or what) the Blueberry Bandit is.

Ch.	Clue I found	What I think it means

My prediction after Chapter 5:

My prediction after Chapter 8:

Suspects ruled out (and how):

Be a Detective!

1. **Clue Check.** Find each clue in the story and name its chapter: only blueberry muffins disappear; the door locks itself; the spare key is missing; a tiny five-fingered handprint; a gray hair with a black stripe; a jingle before sunrise; blue crumbs; handprints on the tree.
2. **Spot the Detour.** Circle the Professor's three wrong theories: The Secret Bran Society / Mr. Grumbold / Biscuit / Clementine the Raccoon. Bonus: whose wrong theory was Marmalade?
3. **Map It Like Dixie.** Draw a map of your room, classroom or street. Hide one clue on it and let a partner find it.

4. **Think Like a Ranger.** Why shouldn't we feed people food to wild animals? Draw one wild food a raccoon would love.

Answer key: Chapters 1, 1, 4, 1 (written down in 2), 6, 6, 8, 9. Wrong theories: Secret Bran Society, Mr. Grumbold, Biscuit. Bonus: Marmalade was Dixie's theory.

Writing Prompt: Invent Your Own Professor's Theory

The Professor's theories are wonderfully wrong. Now it is your turn. Pick a small mystery (a missing sock, a vanished cookie, a crayon that keeps disappearing) and write a **silly theory** the Professor might believe. Then write how Dixie would prove it is not true.

Sentence starters: "Ask yourself, Dixie..." "The thief is clearly..." "A minor scientific detour, because..."

My mystery:

The Professor's theory:

How Dixie proves it wrong:

Draw your theory as a diagram, like the Professor's Theory page in Chapter 2.

A Note About the Dog Biscuit Recipe

The back of the book includes Mrs. Pell's Professor-Approved Dog Biscuits (banana, peanut butter and oats). It is a treat for **dogs**, made with adult help. If you use it in class or at home, please note: an adult handles the oven every time; use peanut butter or sunflower seed butter with **no xylitol** (sometimes called birch sugar), which is very dangerous for dogs; check classroom allergy policies before handling peanut butter, or choose the sunflower option; and ask a vet before giving any dog new foods. Treats are an occasional snack, not a meal.

Coming next: Professor Scruffles and the Great Leash Heist. Every leash in Puddle Creek has vanished, three days before the Dog Parade.

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