

The Oakview Oracle

Maya and Evelyn hunched over the kitchen counter, eating an after-school snack. They were waiting for the Oakview Oracle to post today's column. *Ask the Oracle* was the online kid and teen advice column that absolutely everyone in Oakville read. Students shrieked about it in the lunchroom and whispered about it during math class. People wondered about the identity of the Oracle. Who wrote the columns, and could they trust the advice? Maya and Evelyn were sure they had the mystery figured out. Almost.

The girls opened Evelyn's laptop and watched the page load. Maya crossed her fingers behind her back. She hoped that the Oracle would include another clue to his or her identity so that she and Evelyn could crack the case.

So far, the girls had four suspects. Top on their list was Ms. Page, the school librarian. She loved mystery novels and would be just the kind of person to have a hidden identity.

Evelyn thought the most likely suspect was Mr. Wong from the ice cream shop. He listened to the kids talk while they were eating their cones and always knew everything that was going on at school. Even though he owned the ice cream shop he never ate the ice cream. He had told Evelyn that he was allergic to dairy products.

Maya's favorite choice for the Oracle was their third suspect, Evelyn's fourteen-year-old brother, Rodger. Evelyn claimed that there was no way Rodger could give out such good advice. According to her, Rodger didn't have feelings. But Maya thought Rodger was just good at hiding his feelings. He was always nice to Maya. Once let her borrow a classical music CD for a school project.

Their final suspect was Maya's mom. She was exactly the kind of person you'd want to be giving you advice. Mrs. Rivera was kind and understanding and a really good listener. Plus she baked amazing chocolate chip cookies.

Finally the page loaded and the girls eagerly read the words that appeared on the screen.

Dear Oakville Oracle,

I just turned thirteen, and I am already stressed about my future. What if I don't have time to do everything that I want? I'd like to be a dancer and a violinist and a scientist. But everyone is telling me I have to choose. My mom says I can't take ballet classes and violin lessons and have a part in the school play, too. And she says I have to pick between science society and book club. I'm afraid that if I choose some things and not others, I'm closing doors already. What can I do?

Sincerely, Keep the Doors Open!

Maya pushed refreshed and the answer popped up.

Dear Open Doors,

First, let's get you less stressed. How about some cookies and milk?

That's my go-to comfort food. It does feel overwhelming when you have to make choices. But you have your whole life ahead of you! Your mom is probably worried that you are taking on too much. You need to save some time to hang out with your friends, and of course to do your homework, too. Choosing a few things to focus on means you can get even better at them. And you can always come back to the others later. It should be your choice, but personally I would pick book club (have you read any good mysteries lately?). Or violin is great too. But try not to worry. You have plenty of time. After all, I didn't become an advice columnist until I was much older than thirteen!

Sincerely, Oakville Oracle

Evelyn and Maya looked at each other. "Well," said Maya, "I guess I was wrong."

"Me too," said Evelyn. "At least now we're down to two suspects. Maybe after tomorrow's column it will be case closed!"



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. What is Evelyn's brother's name?
 - a. Timothy
 - b. Frank
 - c. Rodger
 - d. Sam

2. What kind of store does Mr. Wong own?
 - a. Ice cream shop
 - b. Grocery store
 - c. Book store
 - d. Bakery

3. Why is Maya not correct about her Oracle choice?
 - a. Because the Oracle likes the violin
 - b. Because the Oracle is much older than thirteen
 - c. Because the Oracle likes to read mysteries
 - d. Because the Oracle eats cookies

4. Why is Evelyn not correct about her Oracle choice?
 - a. Because the Oracle drinks milk
 - b. Because the Oracle likes the violin
 - c. Because the Oracle is much older than thirteen
 - d. Because the Oracle thinks it's good to hang out with friends

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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