Name: _____ Date: _____

Coo Catches Gumdrop

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 938 words

On Monday, every wheel in Puddlewick went missing, and on Tuesday it was the buttons. On Wednesday somebody took the face off the town clock, and it stood there with its hands up, as if it had been robbed. The town called the police, and the police were a man and a pigeon.

Officer Gus Whistlewick was the biggest police officer Puddlewick had ever had. His hat was as big as a wheelbarrow, and his boots had to come on a ship. He was so gentle that he said sorry to doors when he bumped into them. He was also very bad at puns. I will be counting them, so I am sorry in advance.

His partner was a pigeon named Coo, who wore a badge the size of a button. Coo said only one word, and the word was coo, but everybody in town understood her. One coo meant look out, and a very long, very flat coo meant, Gus, please do not say that pun, but Gus always said it anyway.

On Thursday morning, Mayor Pettigrew stormed into the police station. His hat had lost its button and his watch was gone, and he sat on a bucket because his chair had no wheels. "Every round thing in town!" he cried. Gus rubbed his chin and said, "Then we need a round-up," and that was pun count: one.

POP! The top button flew off Gus's coat, because his chest always puffed out when he was proud of a pun. It bounced twice and rolled under the desk, and Coo dropped it into a tin that said BUTTONS FROM PUNS. The tin was already half full, and the Mayor groaned and left on his bucket.

Outside, Coo found a trail of sticky red blobs going down Main Street like spilled jam. Gus bent down and licked one, to be certain. "Cherry," he said. "A gumdrop." Coo gave him a flat look that meant, You do not lick the clues, and then they followed the blobs all the way to the market.

There, a round little man in a round red coat was stuffing oranges into a cart. The cart squeaked, because its wheels came from a tricycle, and the coat had a hundred buttons that all belonged to somebody else. "I am the Great Gumdrop!" he shouted, "and I take everything round, because corners are for the weak!"

Here is what happened next, so read it fast. WHOOSH! The cart shot off down Main Street. "Stop!" yelled Gus. "No!" yelled Gumdrop. "Coo!" yelled Coo. BONK. Gus ran into a lamp-post and said sorry to it. SPLAT! He slid on an orange and sat down in the road, while the cart rolled round the corner until only the squeak was left.

Gus sat on the curb with orange on his boot. "He is too fast and too round," he said, "so how

do you catch something round?" Coo hopped onto his knee, looked at the tin, and then looked at Gus. "Coo," she said, in the voice that means I have an idea. It was a good one, and I do not say that often.

The roundest thing in Puddlewick was the Mayor's prize cheese. It was as tall as a door, and it sat on top of Pudding Hill, waiting for the Cheese Fair. Coo tied a string to a wedge. Gus and Coo laid a trail of buttons, and Gus whispered, "He will never leave it alone, because it is a big cheese." Pun count: two.

They hid behind a fence and waited for what felt like a week, and the pigeon did not even fidget. "Do you think he will come?" whispered Gus. "Coo," said Coo. "Is that a yes or a no?" "Coo." "Which coo?" Then, far down the hill, they heard a squeak. Squeak. Squeak. Squeak.

The Great Gumdrop came up the hill with his nose to the ground, picking up button after button, and saying, "Ooh, a button. Ooh, another button." At the top he looked up and gasped. "The roundest, biggest, most beautiful thing I have ever seen!" He hugged the cheese and he pushed, but it did not move.

That was when Coo pulled the string. A little wooden wedge flew out from under the cheese, and the cheese began to roll, slowly at first and then faster and faster. Gumdrop stood on top of it, running as hard as he could to stay up, like a hamster in a wheel. "WHOA," he said. "WHOA. WHOA. WHOA!"

Down Pudding Hill it went, through the market and past the clock. It rolled right past the Mayor on his bucket and through the open door of the jail, and it stopped with a thump. It was a bit too enormous, so it filled the whole doorway, and Gumdrop was stuck on top of it. It was the best lock in town.

Gus put his hands on his hips. "Well," he said, "he is behind bars, and in a gouda spot." That was pun count three, and gouda is a kind of cheese, and I did not say it was good. Everybody groaned, even the clock, and then everybody got back their wheels and buttons, and the Mayor rolled away on his chair, squeaking with joy.

That night Gus pinned his coat shut with a safety pin. "Shall I tell you one more pun?" he asked. "Coo," said Coo. "I will take that as a yes," said Gus, and he took an enormous breath. POP. A button flew off and rolled away down Main Street. Coo had the tin open before it landed.

Questions

1. What kind of things did the Great Gumdrop steal?

A. Everything round
B. Everything shiny
C. Everything red

2. What was in the tin that Coo carried?

A. Pigeon seed
B. Buttons from Gus's coat
C. Stolen wheels

3. Why did Gus's buttons pop off?

A. His chest puffed out with pride at a pun
B. Gumdrop tore them off
C. His coat was very old

4. What does the word stormed mean in this story?

A. Went in angrily
B. Flew in a storm
C. Came in slowly

5. How did the heroes catch Gumdrop?

A. They chased him on bikes
B. They used buttons and a giant cheese
C. They asked him to stop

6. Why was a very long, flat coo important to Gus?

A. It meant, please do not say that pun
B. It meant, I am hungry
C. It meant, look out

Words to know

officer: police person
pun: word joke
badge: shiny pin
stormed: stomped in
wedge: small block

Answer key: Coo Catches Gumdrop

1. A. Everything round
2. B. Buttons from Gus's coat
3. A. His chest puffed out with pride at a pun
4. A. Went in angrily
5. B. They used buttons and a giant cheese
6. A. It meant, please do not say that pun