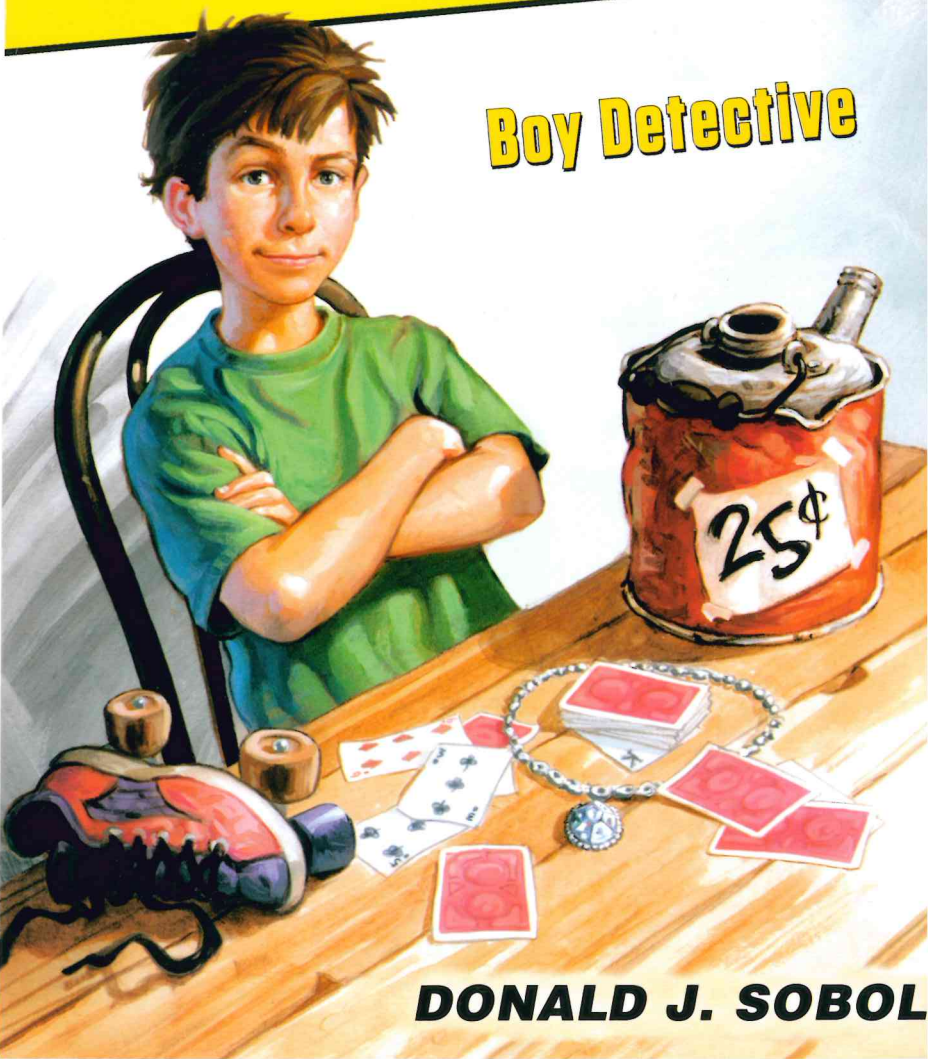


# Encyclopedia Brown

EVERYONE'S  
FAVORITE  
BOY DETECTIVE

Boy Detective



DONALD J. SOBOL

## PUFFIN BOOKS

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# **Encyclopedia Brown**

**No. 1**

Boy Detective

**By DONALD J. SOBOL**

***illustrated by Leonard Shortall***

PUFFIN BOOKS  
An Imprint of Penguin Group (USA)

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## The Case of Natty Nat

Mr. and Mrs. Brown had one child. They called him Leroy, and so did his teachers.

Everyone else in Idaville called him Encyclopedia.

An encyclopedia is a book or a set of books giving information, arranged alphabetically, on all branches of knowledge.

Leroy Brown's head was like an encyclopedia. It was filled with facts he had learned from books. He was like a complete library walking around in sneakers.

Old ladies who did crossword puzzles were always stopping him on the street to ask him questions.

Just last Sunday, after church, Mrs. Conway, the butcher's wife, had asked him: "What is a three-letter word for a Swiss river beginning with A?"

"Aar," Encyclopedia answered after a moment.

He always waited a moment. He wanted to be helpful. But he was afraid that people might not like him if he answered their questions too quickly and sounded *too* smart.

His father asked him more questions than anyone else. Mr. Brown was the chief of police of Idaville.

The town had four banks, three movie theaters, and a Little League. It had the usual number of gasoline stations, churches, schools, stores, and comfortable houses on shady streets. It even had a mansion or two, and some dingy sections. And it had the average number of crimes for a community of its size.

Idaville, however, only *looked* like the usual American town. It was, really, most *unusual*.

For nearly a whole year no criminal had escaped arrest and no boy or girl had got away with breaking a single law in Idaville.

This was partly because the town's policemen were clever and brave. But mostly it was because Chief Brown was Encyclopedia's father.

His hardest cases were solved by Encyclopedia during dinner in the Browns' red brick house on Rover Avenue.

Everyone in the state thought that Idaville had about the smartest policemen in the world.

Of course, nobody knew a boy was the master-mind behind the town's police force.

You wouldn't guess it by looking at Encyclopedia. He looked like almost any fifth-grade boy and acted like one, too—except that he never talked about himself.

Mr. Brown never said a word about the advice his son gave him. Who would believe that his best detective was only ten years old?

This is how it began:

One evening at dinner, Mr. Brown said,

"Natty Nat has struck again. He has held up another store—and right here in Idaville."

"What store, Dad?" asked Encyclopedia.

"The Men's Shop, owned by Mr. Dillon and Mr. Jones," answered Mr. Brown. "That makes six stores Natty Nat has held up in the state this month."

"Are you sure the robber was Natty Nat?" asked Encyclopedia.

"Mr. Dillon himself said it was Natty Nat," replied Mr. Brown.

He pulled a notebook from his pocket and put it beside his plate. "I wrote down everything Mr. Dillon told me about the holdup. I'll read it to you."

Encyclopedia closed his eyes. He always closed his eyes when he was getting ready to think hard.

His father began to read what Mr. Dillon, the storekeeper, had told him about the holdup:

*I was alone in the store. I did not know anyone had come in. Suddenly a man's voice told me*



*to raise my hands. I looked up then. I was face to face with the man the newspapers call Natty Nat. He had on a gray coat with a belt in the back, just as the newspapers said. He told me to turn and face the wall. Since he had a gun, I did as he said. When I turned around again, he was gone—with all the money.*

Chief Brown finished reading and closed his notebook.

Encyclopedia asked only one question: "Did the newspapers ever print a picture of Natty Nat?"

"No," answered his father. "He never stands still long enough for a picture to be taken. Remember, he's never been caught. But every policeman in the state knows he always wears that gray coat with the belt in the back."

"Nobody even knows his real name," said Encyclopedia, half to himself. "Natty Nat is just what the newspapers call him."

Suddenly he opened his eyes. "Say, the only reason Mr. Dillon thought it was Natty Nat was

because of that gray coat!" he said. "The case is solved!"

"There is nothing to solve," objected Chief Brown. "There is no mystery. Mr. Dillon was robbed. The holdup man was the same one who has been robbing other stores in the state."

"Not quite," said Encyclopedia. "There was no holdup at The Men's Shop."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Brown.

"I mean Mr. Dillon wasn't robbed, Dad. He lied from beginning to end," answered Encyclopedia.

"Why should Mr. Dillon lie?" demanded his father.

"I guess he spent the money. He didn't want his partner, Mr. Jones, to know it was missing," said Encyclopedia. "So Mr. Dillon said he was robbed."

"Leroy," said his mother, "please explain what you are saying."

"It's simple, Mom," said Encyclopedia. "Mr. Dillon read all about Natty Nat in the news-



*"Go on, Leroy," said Mr. Brown.*

papers. So he knew Natty Nat always wore a gray coat with a belt in the back when he held up stores."

"Go on, Leroy," said Mr. Brown, leaning forward.

"Mr. Dillon knew it would sound much better if he could blame his holdup on someone people have read about," said Encyclopedia. "He said he knew it was Natty Nat because of the coat he wore—"

"That could be true," Chief Brown said.

"That *couldn't* be true," said Encyclopedia. "Mr. Dillon never saw the back of the man who held him up. He said so himself. Remember?"

Chief Brown frowned. He picked up his notebook again. He read to himself a while.

Then he fairly shouted, "Leroy, I believe you are right!"

Encyclopedia said, "Mr. Dillon only saw the *front* of the holdup man. He had no way of knowing that the man's coat had a belt *in the back!*"

"He stole money from his own store and from his partner too," cried Chief Brown. "And he nearly got away with it!"

He rushed from the dining room.

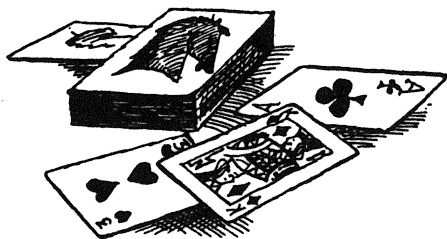
"Leroy," said Mrs. Brown, "did you get this idea from a television program?"

"No," said Encyclopedia. "I got it from a book I read about a great detective and his methods of observation."

"Well," said his mother proudly, "this proves how important it is to listen carefully and watch closely, to train your memory. Perhaps *you* will be a detective when you grow up."

"Mom," said Encyclopedia, "can I have another piece of pie?"

Mrs. Brown sighed. She had taught English in the Idaville High School before her marriage. "You *may* have another piece of pie," she said.



## The Case of the Scattered Cards

At nine o'clock that night Encyclopedia climbed into bed. He lay awake a long time. He thought over what his mother had said to him about being a detective when he grew up.

In the morning he made up his mind.

He would go into the detective business and help people. He wouldn't wait until he grew up. It was summer and school was out. He could begin at once.

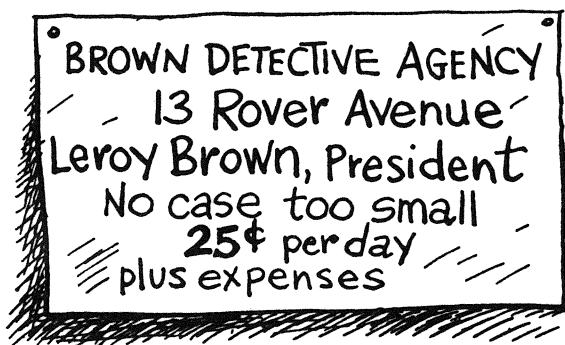
Encyclopedia got out of bed and searched through his closet. He dug out a toy printing press, a Christmas gift from his Uncle Ben two years ago.

As soon as Encyclopedia finished breakfast, he printed fifty handbills. When the ink was dry,

he put the handbills in all the mailboxes in the neighborhood.

Then he went home and asked his mother for a big piece of cardboard. She gave him a dress box from the Bon Ton Store, which she had been saving. Encyclopedia borrowed the kitchen shears and cut out a square piece of cardboard. He took a black crayon and carefully lettered a sign.

The handbills and the sign said:



Encyclopedia nailed the sign on the door of the Browns' garage.

The next morning he sat in the garage, waiting for somebody with a problem to drop in. No-

body dropped in. Only the rain. The roof of the garage had a hole in it.

Rain fell all morning, all afternoon, and all the next day.

Encyclopedia stared at the rain and felt lower than a submarine's bottom. He thought about taking down the sign and going to see what new teeth Charlie Stewart had added to his collection. Or maybe digging for worms with Billy and Jody Turner and fishing off the bridge at Mill Creek.

Suddenly a pair of rubbers and a raincoat appeared in the doorway. Inside them was a small boy.

"My name is Clarence Smith," said the boy. "I need your help."

"No case is too small," said Encyclopedia. "Is it murder?"

"No—" said Clarence, backing away.

"Kidnapping?" asked Encyclopedia. "Black-mail?"

"No—no," said Clarence weakly. "It's a tent."



He placed a quarter on the gasoline can beside Encyclopedia. "The tent is mine. But the Tigers say it's theirs."

"You are having trouble with talking tigers?" Encyclopedia asked.

"Oh, no," replied Clarence. "Tigers—that's the name of a boys' club near the canal. The boys are plenty tough, all of them. But their leader, Bugs Meany, is the toughest one."

"Take me to their leader," commanded Encyclopedia, "and to your tent."

"I'll do both," said Clarence. "Bugs Meany is sitting in the tent this very minute."

After a short walk, the two boys came to the tent. It stood in the woods between the canal and the Pierce Junk Yard.

Six older boys were sitting around a wooden box inside the tent. They were playing cards.

"Which one of you is Bugs Meany?" asked Encyclopedia.

"Me," said the biggest and dirtiest boy. "What's it to you?"

"You are in *my* tent," squeaked Clarence. "I found it. I mended all the holes in it."

"Scram!" growled Bugs.

"You know I found the tent in the junk yard," said Clarence. "You watched me put it up here last week."

"Get going," said Bugs. "I saw you steal it from our clubhouse this morning."

"Mind if I come in out of the rain?" Encyclopedia asked. As he ducked inside the tent, one of his feet hit an extra pack of cards lying beside the wooden box. The cards were scattered over the ground.

"Hey! What's the big idea?" said Bugs.

"The idea is a simple one," said the private detective. "See these cards? They are dry and not the least bit muddy, though I scattered them over the ground. Clarence didn't steal this tent from your clubhouse."

Bugs closed his hands into fists. His chin sprang out like the drawer of a cash register. "Are you calling *me* a liar?"



*"Which one of you is Bugs Meany?"*

"Of course not," said Encyclopedia. "I'm simply going to tell you what I'll tell the police."

Encyclopedia spoke quietly into the older boy's right ear. Bugs listened. His face grew red, and then redder.

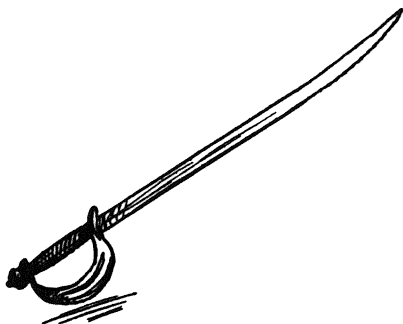
Suddenly he called, "Come on, Tigers! Let's get back to the clubhouse. It's no fun here."

When the Tigers had left, Clarence said to Encyclopedia, "Gosh, what did you say to Bugs?"

Encyclopedia smiled. "I pointed out why you couldn't have stolen the tent from the Tigers' clubhouse."

HOW DID ENCYCLOPEDIA KNOW THIS?

*(Turn to page 79 for the solution to  
The Case of the Scattered Cards.)*



## The Case of the Civil War Sword

A boy with red hair stopped in the doorway of the Brown Detective Agency.

"Are you any good at swords?" he asked.

Encyclopedia did not lift his eyes from his book, *How to Build a Nuclear Reactor*.

"What kind of a game is swords?" he asked.

"It isn't a game," said the red-haired boy. "My name is Peter Clinton. I want to hire you."

Peter put two dimes and a nickel on the gasoline can beside Encyclopedia.

The coins clinked. Encyclopedia stopped reading. He looked up, very businesslike.

"How can I help you?" he asked.

"I have a chance to trade my bicycle for a

sword," said Peter. "I want to make sure the sword is real."

"You don't think the sword is really a sword?" said Encyclopedia. "What do you think it is?"

"That isn't what I mean," Peter said. "It's a sword from the Civil War—"

"There are thousands of swords left over from the Civil War," said Encyclopedia.

"I know," said Peter. "But how many belonged to General Jackson?"

"*Stonewall* Jackson?" gasped Encyclopedia. "The great Southern general?"

"This sword is supposed to have belonged to Stonewall Jackson," said Peter. "Bugs Meany says so."

"Bugs?" Encyclopedia straightened up at the name. "You want me to make sure the sword really did belong to Stonewall Jackson?"

"Yes," said Peter. "Then you'll take the case?"

"I'll take it," said Encyclopedia. "If Bugs is behind the trade, you'll need help."

Peter led the private detective to the Tigers' clubhouse, an unused tool shed behind Mr.



*"The sword is worth ten bikes like mine."*

Sweeny's Auto Body Shop. The Tigers were busy racing garter snakes.

Bugs made a face when he saw Encyclopedia.

"So Mr. Brains is now a Civil War know-it-all," said the Tigers' leader. "Well, well! Maybe you can tell me what Stonewall Jackson did at the Battle of Bull Run."

"Which battle at Bull Run?" asked Encyclopedia. "There were two—one in 1861, the other in 1862."

"Good for you," said Bugs, grinning. "Now don't say this sword isn't the real thing."

Encyclopedia walked to the table on which the sword lay.

Bugs said, "This sword was given to Stonewall Jackson a month after the First Battle of Bull Run."

"If that's true," Peter whispered to Encyclopedia, "the sword is worth ten bikes like mine."

"Twenty," corrected Encyclopedia.

"Read what it says on the blade," said Bugs. Encyclopedia read:



*To Thomas J. Jackson, for standing like a stone wall at the First Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861. This sword is presented to him by his men on August 21, 1861.*

"The sword certainly has seen a lot of use," said Encyclopedia.

"Did you expect it to look new and shiny?" sneered Bugs. "It's more that a hundred years old."

"It doesn't look like it ever was worth five dollars," Encyclopedia said.

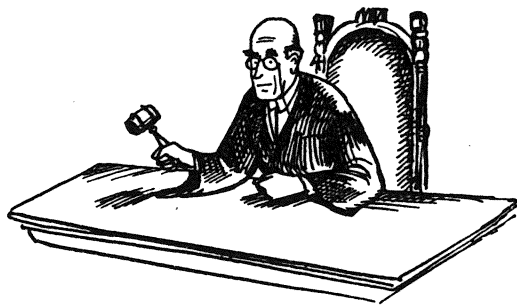
"Never mind how it *looks*," said Peter. "Do you think it belonged to General Jackson?"

Before Encyclopedia could answer, Bugs spoke up. "I sure hate to part with the sword," he said. "But Peter wants it so much I just had to say I'd trade it for his bike."

"Trade? You won't trade with Peter," said Encyclopedia. "This sword never belonged to General Stonewall Jackson!"

HOW DID ENCYCLOPEDIA KNOW THAT?

*(Turn to page 80 for the solution to  
The Case of the Civil War Sword.)*



## **The Case of Merko's Grandson**

Bugs Meany and his Tigers liked to spend rainy afternoons in their clubhouse. Usually, they sat around thinking up ways of getting even with Encyclopedia Brown.

But today they had met for another purpose—to cheer the boy detective on.

Encyclopedia and Sally Kimball were about to meet in a battle of brains.

The Tigers hated Sally even more than they hated Encyclopedia—and with good reason.

When Sally had moved into the neighborhood two months ago, the Tigers jumped to show off for her. She was very pretty and she was very good at sports.

In fact, she got up a team of fifth-grade girls and challenged the Tigers to a game of softball. The boys thought it was a big joke, till Sally started striking them out. She was the whole team. In the last inning she hit the home run that won for the girls, 1-0.

But the real blow fell on the Tigers the next day.

Bugs was bullying a small boy when Sally happened to ride by on her bicycle.

"Let him go!" she ordered, hopping to the ground.

Bugs snarled. The snarl changed to a gasp as Sally broke his grip on the boy.

Before the other Tigers knew what to do, Sally had knocked their leader down with a quick left to the jaw.

Bugs bounced up, surprised and angry. He pushed Sally. She hit him again, with a right to the jaw. Bugs said *oooh*, and went down again.

For the next thirty seconds Bugs bounced up and down like a beach ball. By the fourth bounce,

he was getting up a lot more slowly than he was going down.

"I'm going to make you sorry," he said. But his voice was weak, and he wore the sick smile of a boy who had taken one ride too many on a roller coaster.

"So?" said Sally. She moved her feet and took careful aim.

"This," she said, aiming another blow, "should take the frosting off you."

Bugs landed on his back, flat as a fifteen-cent sandwich. Not until Sally had ridden away did he dare get up.

Sally was not content to rest on her victories at softball and fighting. She aimed higher.

She set out to prove she was not only stronger than any boy up to twelve years of age in Idaville, but smarter, too!

That meant out-thinking the thinking machine, Encyclopedia Brown.

The great battle of brains took place in the

Tigers' clubhouse. The two champions, seated on orange crates, faced each other. The Tigers crowded behind Encyclopedia. The girls' softball team crowded behind Sally. That left just enough room in the tool shed to think.

Everyone stopped talking when Peter Clinton, the referee, announced the rules.

"Sally has five minutes to tell a mystery. She must give all the clues. Then Encyclopedia will have five minutes to solve the mystery. Ready, you two?"

"Ready," said the girl champion.

"Ready," said Encyclopedia, closing his eyes.

"Go!" called Peter, eyes on his watch.

Sally began to tell the story:

"The Great Merko was the best trapeze artist the world had ever seen. People in every big city were thrilled by the wonderful performer swinging fifty feet above the ground!

"In the year 1922, Merko died at the very height of fame. In Merko's desk was found a

letter. It was a will, written by the circus star. The will directed that the star's money be put in a bank for forty years.

"After forty years, the money was to be taken out and given to Merko's oldest grandson. If no grandson was alive, all the money was to go to Merko's nearest relative, man or woman.

"Forty years passed. A search was begun. At last a man was found in Kansas City who said he was Merko's grandson. His name was Fred Gibson. He went to court to claim his inheritance.

"While the judge was listening to him, a tall woman in the back of the courtroom jumped up. She was very excited.

"The woman said she was the trapeze artist's grandniece. She kept shouting that the Great Merko was not Fred Gibson's grandfather. Therefore, the money was rightfully hers.

"The judge questioned the woman. He had to agree with what she said. She was Merko's grandniece, and the Great Merko was *not* Fred Gibson's grandfather.



*The two champions faced each other.*

"Now," concluded Sally. "Who got Merko's money—the tall woman or Fred Gibson?"

Sally wore a smile of triumph as she looked at Encyclopedia.

The tool shed was still. The boys looked at their shoes. Had Sally beaten them again? Had Encyclopedia met his master?

Encyclopedia had five short minutes to solve the brain-twister.

Slowly the minutes ticked away. One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . .

Encyclopedia stirred on his orange crate. He opened his eyes. He smiled at Sally.

"You told it very cleverly," he said. "I nearly said the wrong person. But the answer is really quite simple."

Encyclopedia rose to leave. "The Great Merko's money went to Fred Gibson."

WHY DID ENCYCLOPEDIA SAY THAT?

*(Turn to page 81 for the solution to  
The Case of Merko's Grandson.)*





## The Case of the Bank Robber

"Three dollars and fifty cents!" exclaimed Encyclopedia, as he finished counting the money in the treasury of the Brown Detective Agency. "Business is booming."

"You should put that money in a bank," said Sally Kimball, whom Encyclopedia had made his bodyguard and junior partner. "Money isn't safe in a shoe box."

"Maybe you're right," said Encyclopedia. "Sometimes even shoes aren't safe in a shoe box. It would look awful if a detective agency was robbed!"

The partners talked it over. They decided to take the money downtown to a bank and start a savings account.

It was too far to ride on their bicycles, so they took the bus. They got off near the Corning Na-

tional Bank on Beech Street. As they stepped out of the bus, they heard the sound of shooting.

At first Encyclopedia thought the bus had backfired. A moment later he saw a man in the doorway of the bank.

The man wore a hat. A handkerchief covered the lower part of his face. In one hand he held a yellow paper bag. With the other he waved a gun.

Somebody shouted, "Holdup! Holdup!" Then, all at once, everybody was running, trying to get out of the robber's way.

The man with the gun turned and fled. In his haste he did not seem to look where he was going. He ran into a beggar wearing dark glasses and carrying a white cane and tin cup.

The beggar's cane and cup flew into the street. The robber and the beggar fell to the sidewalk. They rolled about together for a few seconds before the robber broke away and got to his feet.

He raced down the street just as a police car drew up before the bank. Chief Brown and one

of his officers leaped out of the car and ran after the robber.

"We caught him," said Chief Brown at dinner that night. "He led us a merry chase, but we got him. The trouble is we can't charge him with the robbery."

"But why not?" Mrs. Brown demanded.

"Yes, Dad, why not?" Encyclopedia asked. "Wasn't the money he stole in that yellow paper bag he was carrying?"

Chief Brown laid down his fork. "Do you know what we found in that yellow bag of his? Money? No. A loaf of white bread! He resisted police officers, but I don't know how long we can keep him in jail."

"Are you sure you caught the right man, Dad?" Encyclopedia said.

"We'll have a hard time proving it," said Chief Brown. "No one can identify him. And nobody saw the robber's face. He wore a handkerchief over his nose and mouth and his hat was pulled down over his forehead and eyes. This

man we picked up is wearing a brown suit, and the teller at the bank says the robber wore a suit the same color. And, of course, there is the yellow bag. But where's the money?"

"Does the man you picked up have any distinguishing features?" Encyclopedia wanted to know.

"Well, he has a pug nose and a scar running down one cheek. But remember, no one saw the robber's face," said Chief Brown. "I can hold him in jail overnight for resisting a police officer. That's about all."

"I never saw a beggar in Idaville before to-day," said Encyclopedia thoughtfully.

"Oh, the blind man," said Chief Brown. "He seems like a nice old fellow. He calls himself 'Blind Tom.' I hated to tell him it's against the law to beg here."

"The poor man," said Mrs. Brown. "Won't the Salvation Army help him?"

"Yes," replied Chief Brown. "But he said he likes being on his own. He promised to leave town tomorrow."

"Where is he staying?" asked Encyclopedia.

"At the old Martin Inn," answered Chief Brown. "One of those buildings in the row down by the railroad tracks. Why do you ask? Have you got an idea about this case, Leroy?"

"No," mumbled Encyclopedia.

Mrs. Brown looked hurt. She had come to expect her son to solve a case before dessert.

After dinner, Encyclopedia walked over to Sally's house. "I have to work this evening," he said. "I may need you. Want to come?"

"Oh, boy, do I!" Sally sang out.

The sky was growing dark as the two detectives rode their bicycles down a dingy block west of the railroad station.

"Who lives *here*?" asked Sally as Encyclopedia stopped in front of a run-down hotel.

"Blind Tom, the beggar. He'll be leaving town tomorrow. That's why we have to see him this evening."

"Do you think he can help us?" asked Sally.

"I think so. A blind man sees with his hands," replied Encyclopedia. "Remember how the beg-

gar rolled with the robber on the sidewalk? If he *felt* the robber's face through the handkerchief, he might know him again."

"I get it," said Sally. "If he could feel the man's face again, he might know whether the man your father caught is really the robber!"

"Right," answered Encyclopedia.

"Gosh," said Sally, "I hope he hasn't left town yet!"

Inside the hotel, the desk clerk gave the two young detectives some help. Blind Tom lived alone. His room was Number 214.

Sally and Encyclopedia climbed the dark, creaky stairs to the second floor. They knocked on the door numbered 214. Nobody answered.

"Look, the door's not shut," whispered Sally. "Shall I—"

Encyclopedia nodded.

Sally pushed the door till it swung open so that they could look into the room.

The room was small and shabby. Against the far wall stood an iron bed. A small reading lamp



*"Who lives here?" Sally asked.*

cast its light upon a copy of the *Idaville Daily News* that lay open on the pillow.

Suddenly the tapping of a cane sounded in the hall. Tap . . . tap . . . tap . . .

Blind Tom came up behind Sally.

"Is someone here?" he asked. "I haven't had a visitor in a long time. I wasn't expecting anyone tonight, but it's nice to have you." He lifted his cane. "Won't you come in?"

"No, thanks!" said Encyclopedia. He pushed Sally down the hall and hurried her down the stairs.

She didn't have a chance to catch her breath until they were outside the hotel.

"Why the big rush?" Sally asked. "I thought you were going to ask Blind Tom if he could recognize the man who robbed the bank this afternoon."

"I don't have to ask him," replied Encyclopedia. "Blind Tom knows the robber, because Blind Tom helped in the robbery!"

HOW DID ENCYCLOPEDIA KNOW THIS?

(Turn to page 82 for the solution to  
The Case of the Bank Robber.)