The Mystery of the Missing Socks

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Scholastic
Hi, my name is Steve Scoop and I’m a reporter for the Hoopletown Evening Herald. My job is to talk to people and write down what they say. I have three important tools: my notebook, my pencil, and quotation marks.
I’ve just received a hot tip. Mr. McGillicutty is missing a pair of polka-dot socks. My boss wants me to write a story about it for the newspaper.
See, I’ve written down what my boss said in my notebook. I used quotation marks. Don’t they look like they’ve captured the words? That’s what quotation marks do. They’re used to show the exact words that someone has said.
Oops. My boss just told me to stop writing down every word she says.
I had better get to work. My first stop is the scene of the crime—Mr. McGillicutty’s backyard.
Mr. McGillicutty tells me that he hung his wash on the clothesline to dry around 9:00 AM. But when he went out to get it at 11:30 AM, his favorite pair of polka-dot socks had disappeared!
See, I've written down exactly what Mr. McGillicutty said. I placed his comments inside quotation marks. I wonder if his neighbors noticed anything suspicious. I better go investigate.

When you quote people, you have the choice of putting their name at the beginning, middle, or end. This time Steve chose the end, but he could also have chosen the beginning or middle:

- Mr. McGillicutty said, “My socks just disappeared!” (beginning)
- “My socks,” said Mr. McGillicutty, “just disappeared!” (middle)
Now I’m talking to Ms. Slice. She’s given me a really great tip.

I’d bet my hat that it was Harold.
I want to remember Ms. Slice’s comment. So I wrote down exactly what she said. I’ve got to find out more about this mysterious Harold.
Here’s Mike Montey, the mail carrier. He knows the suspect all right, and has some pretty alarming things to say about him.
“Can you believe Harold chased me down the street, then helped himself to a bunch of letters?” asked Mike Montey.

This is incredible! Boy, I wrote down every word. This Harold sounds like a real bully.
Now I’m talking to a girl named Jenny Jennings. She’s 10 years old. Jenny says that, just a few minutes ago, she spotted Harold.

I just saw Harold running toward the park!
Jenny gave me a really great lead. So I wrote it down. I’m hot on Harold’s trail now!

Ten-year-old Jenny Jennings said, “I just saw Harold running toward the park!”

Exclamation marks are used in quotations when the speaker is talking either loudly or excitedly. Remember, exclamation marks also go inside the closing quotation marks, the same as a question mark.
What have we here? There’s a pair of polka-dot socks lying on the ground. They are right beside a dog. Let’s see if I can make out the name on his tag ... Just as I suspected: Harold! Looks like I located the polka-dot sock thief!
“Arf, arf,” said Harold the dog.

To keep your writing lively, it’s a good idea to find other words to use in place of said. For example, you could substitute:

- remarked
- exclaimed
- commented
- shouted
- screamed
- laughed
- reported
- whispered
- sighed
- barked

Which one works best here? Can you think of some others? Brainstorm a list.

Naturally, I wrote down Harold’s statement. Looks like the case of Mr. McGillicutty’s missing socks is officially closed. Now, I just have to write the story.
Mr. Clyde McGillicutty lost a pair of socks today. At approximately 9:00 AM he hung them on his clothesline to dry. Then, when he went out to get them at 11:00 AM, they had vanished. “My socks just disappeared!” exclaimed Mr. McGillicutty.

A neighbor, Ms. Enid Slice, suggested a likely sock-snatching suspect. “I’d bet my hat,” she said, “that it was Harold.” Mr. Mike Montey, the mail carrier, agreed, saying that Harold often gives him trouble. “Can you believe Harold chased me down the street and helped himself to a bunch of letters?” asked Mr. Montey.

It was truly hard to believe. But this reporter was determined to find this footwear fiend. Jenny Jennings, age 10, provided a helpful clue. “I just saw Harold running toward the park!” she reported.

Upon arriving at the park, a pair of polka-dot socks was spotted lying on the ground. Nearby was a small dog. According to his tags, his name was Harold. Mystery solved. Asked what he had to say for himself, Harold replied, “Arf, arf.”

In a late-breaking development, the socks have been returned to Mr. McGillicutty. He promptly put them on and is very happy.
Quotation marks are used to show the exact words that someone says.

- Quotation marks surround the speaker's words. They always appear both before and after the quotation, for instance: “Get the story,” said the boss.

- The speaker's name can appear before a quotation: Ms. Slice said, “I’d bet my hat that it was Harold.” It can appear after a quotation: “I’d bet my hat that it was Harold,” said Ms. Slice. It can even appear in the middle: “I’d bet my hat,” said Ms. Slice, “that it was Harold.”

- When the speaker is asking a question, the question mark goes inside the closing quotation marks: “Can you believe Harold chased me down the street, then helped himself to a bunch of letters?” asked Mike Montery. If the person is speaking loudly or excitedly, the same goes for an exclamation point: “I just saw Harold running toward the park!” Jenny shouted.

- How do you know when to use quotation marks? Only use them if you are writing someone’s exact words. For instance, this sentence does not need quotation marks: Harold barked. But this one does: “Arf, arf,” said Harold. That’s because “Arf, arf” is exactly what Harold said!
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