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# **THE ENGINEER WHO FOUGHT PACKAGE THIEVES WITH GLITTER**

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High-Interest Nonfiction Reading Passage

## **WHAT'S INCLUDED**

- ✓ Reading Passage
- ✓ Comprehension Questions
- ✓ Answer Key
- ✓ Teacher Guide

**GRADES 4-6 • LEXILE ~750L • DOK LEVELS 1-4**

*Reading they'll actually do.*

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### WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ High-interest nonfiction reading passage (300-400 words)
- ✓ 6 comprehension questions spanning DOK levels 1-4
- ✓ Complete answer key with explanations
- ✓ Teacher guide with standards, pacing, and extensions

Questions or feedback? Leave a review or message us through TPT!

# THE ENGINEER WHO FOUGHT PACKAGE THIEVES WITH GLITTER

In 2018, NASA engineer Mark Rober was tired of having packages stolen from his porch. After police told him they couldn't help, he decided to take matters into his own hands—using his engineering skills to create the ultimate revenge device: a glitter bomb that would explode inside thieves' cars.

Rober spent six months designing and building what he called the 'Glitter Bomb 1.0.' The device looked like an ordinary Apple HomePod box, but inside was a sophisticated trap. When opened, spinning motors would spray fine glitter everywhere while four smartphones recorded video from multiple angles. The device also released fart spray for good measure.

The video of thieves opening the package and being showered with glitter became one of the most-watched YouTube videos of 2018, with over 90 million views. People loved watching the shocked reactions as glitter exploded into cars and homes, creating a mess that's nearly impossible to fully clean.

Rober continued improving his design. Later versions included GPS tracking to follow packages after theft, louder fart spray, and even better glitter distribution systems. Each year's video attracted tens of millions of views and inspired countless imitators.

The project raised questions about vigilante justice. While most viewers cheered the thieves' comeuppance, some worried about encouraging people to take revenge into their own hands. Rober was careful to note that his device caused no physical harm—just embarrassment and difficult cleaning.

Package theft has become increasingly common as online shopping grows. Police departments often lack resources to investigate these relatively minor crimes. Rober's glitter bombs provided both entertainment and a conversation about how communities should handle petty crime.

The project also showed how engineering creativity can be used for unexpected purposes. Rober turned his NASA-level skills toward solving an everyday problem, proving that sometimes the best inventions are the most satisfying ones.

Word Count: 306 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: YouTube

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1

**How long did Rober spend building his first glitter bomb?**

- ☐ A) One week
- ☐ B) One month
- ☐ C) Six months
- ☐ D) One year

2

**What did the device release in addition to glitter?**

- ☐ A) Water
- ☐ B) Fart spray
- ☐ C) Smoke
- ☐ D) Paint

3

**Why did Rober create the device himself instead of calling police?**

- ☐ A) He wanted YouTube fame
- ☐ B) Police told him they couldn't help with package theft
- ☐ C) He didn't trust police
- ☐ D) It was illegal to report theft

4

**What ethical concern did some people have about the glitter bombs?**

- ☐ A) Glitter is bad for the environment
- ☐ B) They worried about encouraging vigilante justice
- ☐ C) The videos were fake
- ☐ D) Package theft isn't real

5

**What broader problem does Rober's project highlight about modern society?**

- ☐ A) People buy too much online
- ☐ B) As online shopping grows, package theft increases but police lack resources to address it
- ☐ C) Engineers have too much free time
- ☐ D) Glitter should be banned

6

**What does Rober's project suggest about applying professional skills to everyday problems?**

- ☐ A) Only NASA problems matter
- ☐ B) Advanced skills can create creative solutions to ordinary frustrations
- ☐ C) Engineers should only work on serious projects
- ☐ D) Package theft can't be solved

## ANSWER KEY

### The Engineer Who Fought Package Thieves With Glitter

**1. C) Six months**

*DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'Rober spent six months designing and building.'*

**2. B) Fart spray**

*DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'The device also released fart spray.'*

**3. B) Police told him they couldn't help with package theft**

*DOK 2 — Inference. The passage states: 'After police told him they couldn't help, he decided to take matters into his own hands.'*

**4. B) They worried about encouraging vigilante justice**

*DOK 2 — Inference. The passage notes: 'some worried about encouraging people to take revenge into their own hands.'*

**5. B) As online shopping grows, package theft increases but police lack resources to address it**

*DOK 3 — Analysis. The passage explains: 'Package theft has become increasingly common as online shopping grows. Police departments often lack resources to investigate these relatively minor crimes.'*

**6. B) Advanced skills can create creative solutions to ordinary frustrations**

*DOK 4 — Extended Thinking. The passage concludes that Rober 'turned his NASA-level skills toward solving an everyday problem,' showing that expertise can be applied in unexpected and satisfying ways.*

## **TEACHER GUIDE**

The Engineer Who Fought Package Thieves With Glitter

### **STANDARDS ALIGNMENT**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 — Refer to details and examples in a text
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4 — Determine meaning of words and phrases
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.8 — Explain how author uses evidence
- NGSS — Connections to scientific practices

### **PACING OPTIONS**

- Quick Read (10-15 min): Passage + questions 1-4
- Standard (20-25 min): Full passage + all questions
- Deep Dive (35-40 min): Add discussion + extension

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Is Rober's glitter bomb justice or vigilantism? Where's the line?
- Why do you think package theft has increased? What are some solutions besides glitter bombs?
- The videos went viral because people enjoyed watching thieves get 'punished.' What does this say about human nature?

### **EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

- Design your own non-harmful anti-theft device using engineering principles.
- Research package theft statistics and create an infographic about the problem.
- Write an opinion piece arguing for or against citizen-created anti-theft devices.

### **DIFFERENTIATION**

- Struggling: Pre-teach vocabulary, partner reading
- Advanced: Add research, compare to related events
- ELL: Visual supports, pre-teach context

### **SOURCE**

- YouTube / Wired Magazine