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Party games for 8 to 100 guests

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presents...

“Mystery In The Library”

Host Guide With Teacher’s Notes

by Stephanie Chambers

Second edition.

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Host's guide

It is easy to prepare and run a mystery party. We recommend that as host you should also take a role and participate along with everyone else. With our mysteries, not even the murderer knows who did it. But with a little intelligence and a careful ear for important clues, it is possible to solve the mystery.

Preparing for the party

- 1 Open the kit. The name of the kit shows the recommended minimum number of guests and the maximum number of guests for which this kit caters.
- 2 Decide when you will be having the party, where and who will play each role. You should read the description of each character and try to select a role for each guest. Or you may like to give your guests a choice of the roles not yet taken and let them decide for themselves. It is better if people play roles that are as different as possible from their normal lives.
- 3 We recommend that you tell your guests to: "Please dress up as your character. Over dressing and going to extremes is highly recommended." We generally find that the more people put into the event, the more fun it is.
- 4 Decide how you want to do the invitations. You can print out the Word or Adobe Acrobat versions and handwrite the details, or you can type in your party details before you print it out. There are four invitations per page. You can print them in color or black and white or you may like to print them on colored paper.
- 5 Or you could paste the jpg version into an email and add your party details and send this to each guest.
- 6 The invitations refer your guests to read a web page to find out more details about their character (ie their character's description and their dress suggestions). They should try and read the descriptions of all of the suspects before they come to the party. We sometimes hide clues in these. However, they don't need to read the descriptions of the optional characters.
- 7 You may like to have a copy of the suspect pages available at the party in case some guests didn't get time to read them before the party.
- 8 Print out the kit.
- 9 Cut each page in two using a guillotine/paper trimmer or scissors. Don't read the clues beforehand as it will spoil your enjoyment of the party, and you may spoil everyone else's enjoyment by letting on that you know everything!
- 10 The "Who Did It" pages are at the end with a warning beforehand not to read the next section. Fold these unread, put them in an envelope and open it at the end of your party to find out who did it.
- 11 Print a name tag for each guest. You can print them in color or black and white or you may like to print them on thicker or colored paper. Cut these up and have some small safety pins handy.
- 12 **For the meet and mingle versions:** If you think some of your guests may not turn up you could cut up the extra clues and have them in a bowl so people can help themselves. You may like to save some clues to hand out in the middle of the party when people may be tired of their original clues. **For the play version:** Divide up the "Anyone" lines amongst those playing the optional investigator and witness roles. Write their character's name next to the line you would like them to say. If you don't have many people playing the optional roles, you can give some of these lines to suspects but make sure the line isn't about them.
- 13 Print additional copies of the map to hand out or enlarge it and put it on the wall.
- 14 Decorate the room just before the party (see *Décor suggestions*).
- 15 Prepare or arrange for food for the event (see *Menu suggestions*).
- 16 Decide whether you are going to have prizes for the party (see *Preparing prizes*). This is optional, but recommended.

Décor suggestions

These are suggestions you might like to follow to make the location look like a library:

- A few bookcases filled with books
- A few small tables with books scattered on them
- A couple of books (eg cheap paperbacks or books people don't want any more) in the middle of the table or arranged between bookends so it is like a mini library (if possible put at least one copy of their characters book on the table)
- Placemats printed on paper to look like books spread open
- Play a variety music suited to some of the characters. For example, the soundtrack to Aladdin etc.

Menu suggestions

You can serve whatever you want. However, as most of the characters are from long ago, you might aim for an olden day feel. For example, you could serve meat or vegetable pies, a roast and Yorkshire pudding for main course and bread and butter pudding for dessert. Search for recipes on the Internet (eg search for specific recipes on www.google.com).

If it is a children's party, it is best to serve normal children's party food as that is what they are familiar with.

You may like to create some fun food relating to certain characters such as porridge for Goldilocks and a cake marked "Eat Me" for Alice in Wonderland (and everyone else) to eat.

Preparing prizes (optional)

This is optional, but you may like to have some prizes available to give to the people:

- who guess who did it
- with the best costume.

You can reduce the number of people you have to give a prize to by asking for details as to who, how and why the person did it.

If you do have prizes, you should let people know they exist just after you read out "*The Rules*".

Tip: Don't assume that only one person will guess who did it. It is best to have a prize you can divide up (eg a box of chocolates or a bag or box of Turkish Delights). If no one guesses correctly, divide the prize up amongst everyone.

If you have a color printer and some T-shirt transfers, you may like to download and print out some of our special T-shirt logos (ie "I Gussed Who Did It" and "I Had The Best Costume"). See <http://www.merrimysteries.com/tmm/prizes.htm> for details. These are free to download.

Running the party

We suggest that you run the party as follows:

- 1 Have everyone's nametags on a table near the entrance so people can collect nametag as they arrive. Or hand them to your guests as they arrive.
- 2 When everyone has arrived, read *The Rules* to everyone.
- 3 Have each suspect introduce themselves to the group by saying their character's name and a few words about themselves from their description. They do not have to read out their long description as guests should have read these themselves before the party.
- 4 Check that everyone has read the "*The Suspects*" pages. If they haven't, give them a few minutes to read them quickly. There may be important clues in "*The Suspects*" pages.
- 5 **For the meet and mingle version:** Ask the guests to meet and mingle and find out information. Make sure everyone tells the people they meet about their clues and that everyone participates. You may like to encourage people who are shy by asking them a question or two. Once people find out things they think may be important, they can also pass that on to the people they meet. **For the play version:** Begin reading the play.
- 6 Serve your First Course (if you are serving various courses, otherwise, just make the food available and let people know they can eat it during the party).

- 7 Have the investigator (or someone else) read the investigator's report and then let people mingle some more and serve some more food.
- 8 Serve hot drinks and after dinner mints (if applicable).
- 9 Ask each person to think about who did it and why and how they did it. Ask them to write down their final choice. When they are ready, go around the group and ask everyone who they think did it and why and how they did it.
- 10 After everyone has had a guess, take the *Who Did It* pages out of their sealed envelope and read as specified.
- 11 Present the prizes (if you are providing these). If more than one person guesses correctly, give the prize to the person who has the most correct answers as to how and why the person did it. You may like to also give a prize for the person who has the best (or most creative) costume.

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These are to be read out by the host to the whole group at the beginning of the party:

Welcome to "Mystery In The Library"!

The other night in the library, when many characters were out of their books enjoying a sojourn in the night air, a crime was committed, grim and grave, right in our own library. As a result his Majesty Henry VIII – that famous monarch from the English history books – has disappeared. Gathered are the characters who were present in the library at the time of the nasty deed. But the perpetrator of this heinous crime will no doubt be revealed as the night proceeds.

You have all been asked to remain here for questioning by the police. You must tell as many people as you can what you know. If you find out interesting new information, you can also pass that on to the people you meet. We must all work together to help determine who is the villain in our midst. And you must do whatever you have been instructed to do. Don't panic if you don't get to talk to everyone. You will hear and see enough to help you work out who did it. You may want to jot down some notes on your clue page. When we do have some facts or evidence, we will read these to you.

There is no need to hurry through this and you can adlib a little if you want. You do not have to read each clue exactly as it is written – embellish it if you want. You might like to speak in slang or with an accent. For example, if you are playing a snob, you might speak as if you have a plum in your mouth. If your character is distressed, you could reveal your clues in between sobs. Act it out to the fullest. This is your chance to be dramatic!

At the end of the party you will be asked to guess who performed the crime and how and why they did it. If you work out who did it before the party ends please keep it to yourself. *Optional:* There is a prize for the people who guess who did it. There is also a prize for the person with the best costume.

The Library

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About these notes

The exercises in these notes are to be used in conjunction with the *Mystery in the Library* play versions for 10 to 30 guests and the meet and mingle versions for 17 to 30 guests. They are designed to stimulate reading, research and creative writing skills in middle school and high school students. See the *Mystery handout* at the end of this host guide.

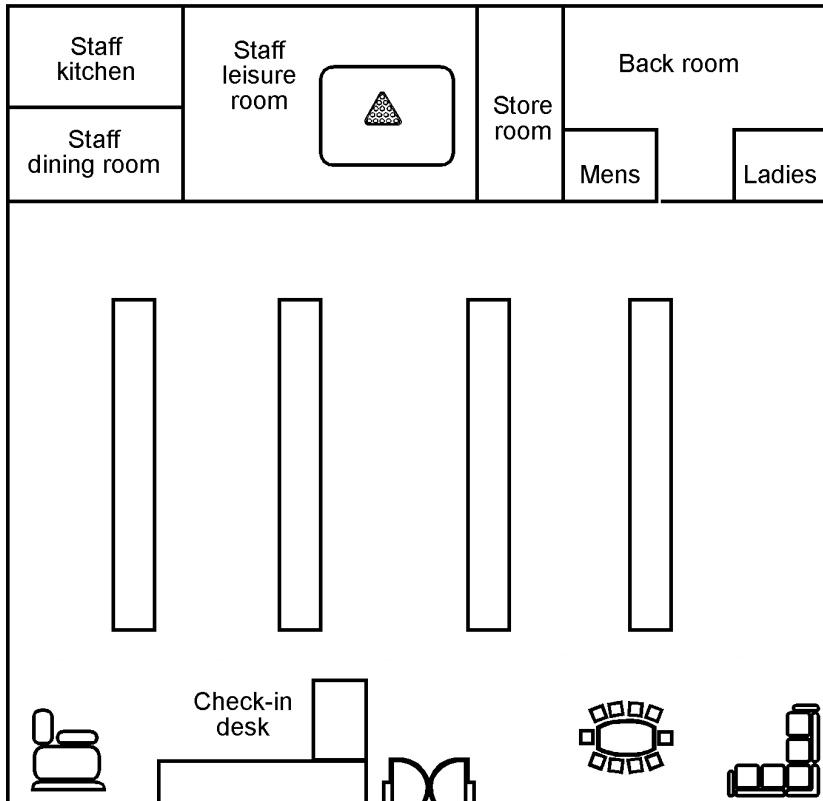
Students should be asked to pay close attention to the clues when performing the mystery, as they will be asked to recall specific information obtained along the way.

Before the event, discuss “motive” and at the end of Act One for the play version or after they have mingled for a while for the meet and mingle versions, ask the students what was the motive for each of the suspects. Why did they seem to want to commit the crime? What was their motivation?

Before Acts Two and Three for the play version or after they have mingled for a while longer for the meet and mingle versions, discuss “modus operandi” – their method of operation or their plan to commit the crime. Get them to focus on whether the character’s plan is feasible? Would it be easy to implement? Or if they didn’t have an actual plan, based on their life experience and skills, how would they have been likely to commit this crime?

Get the class to think about what has happened and how has it strengthened each of the suspect’s resolve to commit the crime.

Get the students to think about whether any of the earlier clues or character descriptions of the suspects provide any clues as to who may actually have committed the crime.



After the event, are there any issues or aspects of history or culture that you want to discuss in more depth? For example, do you want to use King Henry as a way to discuss the history of divorce? Should people be allowed to get divorced? In Ireland, they have only been allowed to divorce since 1997 and even now they have to be separated for 5 years before they can get a divorce. Many cultures have different laws relating to divorce (see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divorce_law_around_the_world). For example, people in the Philippines generally can't get divorced.

Exercise 1: Remembering the Story

Aim: To aid recall of plot, characters and motives.

Time: 30 minutes – 1 hour (time will vary depending on student age and how recently the mystery was performed).

Directions:

A: After the students have guessed who did it at the end of the game and heard the results, move students into small groups (threes or fours). Hand out the following thirty questions to be completed (on paper) in a designated period of time. Provide incentive for speed and accuracy.

OR

B: Move the students into small groups. Do not show them the questions but ask an even number of questions to each group until all questions have been asked. After a brief group discussion a nominated person should answer for each group. For fun ad-lib game show formats, keep score, and offer an incentive/prize for the winning team.

Reference to the kit notes permitted at discretion of the teacher.

OR

C: Present questions as an individual homework or class work research exercise.

Exercise 1: Remembering the Story

- 1 Was it useful that Alice was nine feet high?
- 2 What didn't Alice tell the King about the drink she offered him?
- 3 What did Huck Finn do to the King with his sword?
- 4 What did the King take from Aladdin?
- 5 What did Huck Finn want to change the King into?
- 6 Who made the meat pie that Tom Sawyer ate?
- 7 Why was the King upset with Cinderella?
- 8 What did the Fairy Godmother give Cinderella to protect her from the King?
- 9 Did Snow White like the King?
- 10 What did Snow White do to the toothpicks and what was her plan?
- 11 What did Pinocchio want to turn the King into and why?
- 12 Why didn't Pinocchio like the King?
- 13 Why did the King sentence Peter Pan to death?
- 14 Why couldn't the King rule over Never Never Land?
- 15 What does Tinkerbell say about book characters?
- 16 Why did Robin Hood not like the King?
- 17 Why didn't Robin Hood's men slay King Henry?

- 18 Why was the King sobbing in front of Robin Hood?
- 19 What did the King want from Little Red Riding Hood?
- 20 Why did the King crawl into the cupboard at Grandmother's house?
- 21 What did Goldilocks put on King Henry's chair?
- 22 Why did the King get so angry with Aladdin?
- 23 Why did Aladdin do to stop the King making wishes come true with the genie?

Remembering the Story

Answers

- 1 Was it useful that Alice was nine feet high? **Answer:** No, it was difficult to hide from the King.
- 2 What didn't Alice tell the King about the drink she offered him? **Answer:** If he drank it he would become so small she could squash him.
- 3 What did Huck Finn do to the King with his sword? **Answer:** He whacked his sword into his middle.
- 4 What did the King take from Aladdin? **Answer:** His lamp.
- 5 What did Huck Finn want to change the King into? **Answer:** A meat pie.
- 6 Who made the meat pie that Tom Sawyer ate? **Answer:** Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother.
- 7 Why was the King upset with Cinderella? **Answer:** Because she avoided him.
- 8 What did the Fairy Godmother give Cinderella to protect her from the King? **Answer:** A bell.
- 9 Did Snow White like the King? **Answer:** No, he was too large but she knew he was besotted by her beauty.

- 10 What did Snow White do to the toothpicks and what was her plan? **Answer:** She poisoned them all and made sure the King dined alone but when they were counted one was missing.
- 11 What did Pinocchio want to turn the King into and why? **Answer:** A donkey to carry his loads.
- 12 Why didn't Pinocchio like the King? **Answer:** The King kept pulling on his long nose and making him carry things.
- 13 Why did the King sentence Peter Pan to death? **Answer:** Because Peter Pan wouldn't teach him to fly.
- 14 Why couldn't the King rule over Never Never Land? **Answer:** Because Peter Pan was born when Never Never Land had its independence from England.
- 15 What does Tinkerbell say about book characters? **Answer:** They are almost immortal because they come alive each time someone reads the story.
- 16 Why did Robin Hood not like the King? **Answer:** Because their attitudes were opposite, Robin Hood gave to the poor, the King took from them.
- 17 Why didn't Robin Hood's men slay King Henry? **Answer:** Because the library would make them pay for the clean up costs.
- 18 Why was the King sobbing in front of Robin Hood? **Answer:** Because he didn't want to be burned at the stake.
- 19 What did the King want from Little Red Riding Hood? **Answer:** Her cape.
- 20 Why did the King crawl into the cupboard at Grandmother's house? **Answer:** To hide from the woodcutter with the axe.
- 21 What did Goldilocks put on King Henry's chair? **Answer:** A whoopee cushion.
- 22 Why did the King get so angry with Aladdin? **Answer:** Because Aladdin told him to stop muttering about how he didn't want to share his shelf space.
- 23 Why did Aladdin do to stop the King making wishes come true with the genie? **Answer:** Aladdin told the genie all the King's wishes had to end up the exact opposite.

Exercise 2: Recognizing interesting character traits

Aim: To identify the traits that make up individual characters, to examine character appeal and create new characters.

Time: 1- 2 hours depending on research time allowed.

Directions:

Have students pick three (or more if desired) characters from the suspect list that appealed to them.

Ask them to:

- Write 50 words about the character's **personality** in the mystery.
- Write about what appealed to them about the characters they chose – dot point specific character traits.
- Use some of the character traits above and describe three (or more) new 21st century book characters who have similar traits.
- Share their character descriptions with the class.
- Compare character concepts and discuss them.
- Compare vocabulary used to express emotions.
- Compare their understanding of the character's role.

Ask the students to choose their words thoughtfully and to avoid words like “nice”, “lovely”, “pretty”, “ugly”. Instead have them describe the specific features and personality nuances of the character. Emphasize that it is often the little things that matter most as they help to make the character who they are.

Exercise 3: Researching characters

Aim: To understand the role of research when creating characters.

Time: 40 minutes.

Directions:

History provides an abundant supply of interesting information which can be gathered and used with other information to create characters, plots and stories. Using characters from Mystery in the Library research historical facts about the characters below.

A: King Henry VIII

Cinderella learnt more about the life of King Henry VIII by doing a computer search over the internet. Have students go to a search engine (eg Google) and type in “King Henry VIII”.

Have them read through the sites and select ones which might offer answers to the following questions:

- a) In what era did King Henry VIII live?
- b) How many wives did he have? Who were they?
- c) How did they die?
- d) Which child of the King’s carried on his royal line – who did she become?
- e) Apart from his wives, for what else was King Henry famous?

B. Choose two characters from the mystery

- f) Research their historical links and/or origins.
- g) How could their ‘stories’ be adapted to new characters?

Mystery handout

Facts which could be important			
Suspect	Motive	Why they could have done it	Why they couldn't have done it
Alice			
Huck Finn			
Cinderella			
Pinocchio			
Snow White			
Peter Pan			
Little Red Riding Hood			
Robin Hood			
Goldilocks			
Aladdin			