

HOST GUIDE FOR THE DOWNLOADED KIT

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 criminal knows who did it. But with a little intelligence and a careful ear for important clues, it is possible to solve the mystery.

You can run this party as an online video party for 8 guests or as a play for a small group of 8 guests (4 females and 4 males), or you can buy additional downloadable characters at <https://www.merrimysteries.com/product/murder-on-the-prairie-additional-characters>. If you have more than 16 guests, we recommend you use it as a “meet and mingle” party rather than as a play. If you have a small group and only 30 minutes of time, you could skip Acts 2 and 3 and just read the REPORTS instead.

Preparing for the party

- 1 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.
- 2 Download <https://www.merrimysteries.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/prairie-SUSPECTS.pdf>. Then email this or a link to this to your guests. If they aren't playing a suspect, also attach the appropriate **Prairie CHARACTERS** file (pdf) that includes their character:

Dear:

Date:

Time:

Place:

Character:

Please dress up as your character (see attached). Over dressing and going to extremes is highly recommended!

Please read about the suspects (see attached) before the party as they sometimes contain clues to help you solve the mystery.

- 3 You may like to have the <https://www.merrimysteries.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/prairie-SUSPECTS.pdf> page available at the party in case some guests didn't get time to read them before the party. If you have downloaded additional characters, you may also like to print them out and have them available at the party.
- 4 Print the **Prairie-CLUES** file. If you are having a small party of only 8 guests, give each suspect their page. You can ignore the extra clues. If you are using this for a larger group, ignore the names of the suspects on each page and cut out each clue box. There are 108 clues (including the extra clues). Divide them up as evenly as you can. The suspects will get at least 2 clues each.
- 5 Note that some clues are to be given to suspects or investigators (or “Anyone” if you don't have any present). Divide the “anyone” clues up evenly amongst however many people you have playing the optional witness roles (or the other roles if you don't have any witnesses). Just make sure you don't give it to the character(s) mentioned in the clue. You may like to choose beforehand who will say each of the “Anyone” clues and write their character's name next to each one. 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!
- 6 Print the **Prairie-RULES** file. Note that there are different rules pages to print depending on whether you are having a small party for 8 to 16 guests or a larger party with more than 16 guests.
- 7 Print the **Prairie-REPORTS** file. However, this is optional if you are having a small party of 8 to 16 guests.
- 8 Print the **Prairie-WHODIDITWHODIDIT** file. Fold these unread, put them in an envelope. Open it at the end of your party to find out who did it. If you are hosting an online video party, copy and paste each person's section into an email to them and send each one after the previous person says their section.
- 9 **OPTIONAL:** Print as many copies of the **Prairie-OPTIONAL-HANDOUT** as you need so that everyone will receive one. Note that there are two per page, so if you have 10 guests, you will only need 5 copies. Cut it up.

- 10 **OPTIONAL:** Print as many copies of the **any-kit-NOTES** as you need so that everyone will receive one. Note that there are ten per page, so if you have 10 guests, you will only need 1 copy. Cut it up. People will use this to cast their votes.
- 11 **OPTIONAL:** Print a nametag for each character on Avery Adhesive Name Badge format stickers for 2 – 1/3 inch x 3 – 3/8 inch (or on ordinary paper or card stock and provide pins). Use the **Prairie-SUSPECT-NAMETAGS** file and the appropriate **Prairie CHARACTERS** files for the extra characters.
- 12 Decorate the room just before the party (see *Décor suggestions*), prepare the props (see *Preparing props*), prepare or arrange for food for the event (see *Menu suggestions*) and 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 your place look American:

- Check tablecloths
- Daisies in vases
- Rustic furniture
- Bales of hay
- Play square dance / hillbilly / folk music.

Menu suggestions

First Course:

- potato skins
- creamy corn filled pastries.

Second Course:

- roast dinners
- steaks and salads
- meat and/or vegetable pies.

Desserts:

- pumpkin pie
- apple pie
- caramel cream pie
- lemon meringue pie.

Search for recipes on the Internet (e.g., search for “American recipes” on www.google.com).

If you are holding the party as a sit-down dinner, don’t assign fixed seating arrangements. Allow people to sit near the people that their clue(s) indicates they have to speak with. Also allow people to mingle a bit before and after dinner so they can chat with more people and find out more. Some of the suspects may also like to move around a little to other tables between courses.

Preparing props

You may like to stuff some clothes as a body of the victim. He was shot in the back at the river.

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
- wear 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 (e.g., 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 (i.e., "I Gussed Who Did It" and "I Had The Best Costume"). See <https://www.merrimysteries.com/partytips/murder-mystery-party-prizes/> for details. These are free to download.

Running the party

We suggest that you run the party as follows:

- 1 Give each guest his or her nametag. If you have more than 16 guests and are running this as a "meet and mingle" party, give everyone their clue(s).
- 2 Read **THE RULES** to everyone. Note that there are different rules depending on whether you are running a small party with no more than 16 guests or a larger party. You may also like to leave a copy of the rules near the entrance for people who arrive late to read.
- 3 Have everyone (or just the suspects if this is a large party with more than 16 guests) introduce themselves to the group by saying their character's name and a few words about themselves from their description.
- 4 Check that everyone has read **THE SUSPECTS** page. If they haven't, give them a few minutes to read them quickly. We sometimes hide clues in these descriptions.
- 5 If you have more than 16 guests and are running this as a "meet and mingle" party, ask them to mingle and find out information. Make sure everyone tells the people they meet about their clues and that everyone participates. Once people find out things they think may be important, they can also pass that on to the people they meet. The suspects will generally have answers to people's questions amongst the cards they receive. If a person comes up to them with a clue question, the answer will be the consecutive number (e.g., if the question is 2.5, their answer will be 2.6).
- 6 Serve your First Course or have dips available (if you are serving various courses, otherwise, just make the food available and let people know they can eat it during the party). If you are having a small party, generally we don't recommend you continue with the play while people are eating unless you are pressed for time.
- 7 If it says "Anyone" can say the clue, give it to someone who hasn't had much to say or if you have people playing optional roles, give it to one of them (they should be taking turns to say the "Anyone" clues). Just make sure it said by someone whose character is mentioned in the clue or that isn't the next character to speak in the play. Make sure everyone reads out all his or her lines and that everyone participates.
- 8 Serve the Second Course of your meal (if applicable).
- 9 If you are having a small party, do Act Two (unless you only have 30 minutes in which case you can skip it).
- 10 Serve Dessert (if applicable).
- 11 If you are having a small party, do Act Three (unless you only have 30 minutes in which case you can skip it).
- 12 If you are having a large party, have the **REPORTS** read out to the whole group. Have the Sheriff read out the **Police Report**. Then have a doctor (or someone else if not present) read out the **Medical Report**. Then have Richard's lawyer (or someone else if not present) read out the **Last Will and Testament**. If you are having a small party, these reports are optional unless you skipped Acts 2 and 3 because you are having a quick party.
- 13 Serve hot drinks and after dinner mints (if applicable).
- 14 Ask your guests to write down their name and who they think did it and how and why they did it on their note card. And also, their vote for the person they felt had the best costume. Collect everyone's votes.
- 15 After everyone has had a guess, take the **WHO DID IT** pages out of their sealed envelope and read in the order specified. If you are hosting an online video party, copy and paste each person's section into an email to them and send each one after the previous person says their section.
- 16 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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