



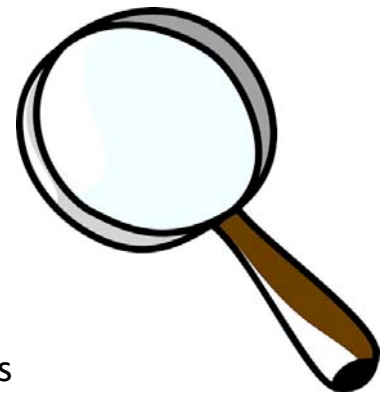
Mystery Party Kit

Introduction:

This Mystery Party Kit should help you throw an exciting and educational classroom party based around the mystery genre. By all means, tweak and adapt this outline to best fit your students' needs. These activities are most effective when used to introduce or close a mystery book unit. Your party can take anywhere from one day to one month, it all depends on you. Now go have fun!

What you will need:

- Something that will be stolen
- Clues. These can be anything from 3"x5" cards to cutouts of mysterious footprints. It is good to keep clues consistent, so students will recognize them as a clue more quickly.
- A teacher, parent or staff member to pose as the thief.
- Classroom set of Mystery Challenge bookmarks.
- You can receive Mystery Challenge bookmarks for free. There are two ways. 1) Download and print off the bookmarks yourself by visiting www.childrensmysterybooks.org and selecting the Freebies tab. Or 2) you can send a self-addressed stamped envelope to:



Gallopade International
Attn: The Children's Mystery Book Challenge
P.O. Box 2779 Peachtree City, GA 30269

Instructions:

Step 1

Choose what is to be stolen—it should be something the students will quickly notice is missing when they arrive at the crime scene. (Tip: Classroom mascots work well.)

Step 2

Choose who your thief is going to be—a neighboring teacher, or fun participatory parent works the best. You need to have your thief appointed from the beginning so you can begin to create clues that will eventually point to this person. Remember; DON'T SPILL THE BEANS! You never know how things might get around so don't reveal your thief's identity to too many people.

Step 3



Set up the crime scene. Students should arrive at school the first day of the unit and see the crime scene. Do not tell the kids what happened! Share only that there was a robbery and they need to go in the classroom, identify what is missing and gather as many clues as they can. Again it will be easier for them to identify clues if they are all uniform. (Tip: When setting up your crime scene

remember: tempura paint will wipe right off the tables and gaffer's and painters tape won't leave a residue.)

Step 4

Start the Unit! Within the first few days you should eliminate yourself as a suspect by sending home a clue that reads, "I am not the teacher."

Don't rush it. This mystery can last as long as you need it to, but remember as with all good mysteries the suspense builds with time and you don't want kids to solve the mystery too soon or before you are prepared. However, be sure to include regular advances in the mystery so students feel they are getting closer to solving the crime.

Step 5

Periodically send home or place a clue in the classroom.

Sample clues:

- Early in the unit you might send home an incredibly difficult word scramble for the parents to solve. Make it nearly impossible!
- Easy nightly clues may include:
 - I am not Mr. L.
 - I am not a kid.
 - I am not a mom.
 - I am a dad.
 - I have a daughter.
 - I am a good dancer (just to be silly).

Place an item in the classroom, which can be associated with the thief. Tell students you found this under your desk and it must have been left on accident during the robbery. Have students use deductive reasoning to rule out suspects.

The night before the missing item is returned, find some way to reveal the thief's identity. This ensures that students will not be scared when you corner the thief, since they will be fairly sure who it is. This could include sending home the silhouette of your thief or providing a blurry picture saying the school's camera caught the thief in the act.

See example below of a clue format you can use.

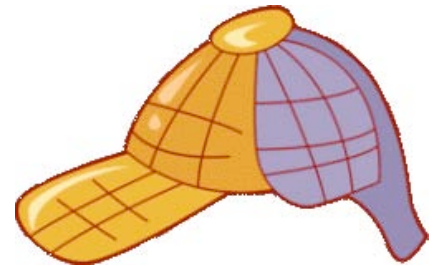
Step 6

When you are certain a good number of your students know whom the thief is, ask him/her to come in to return the item. Bringing treats in as well typically kills any grudges the students may be holding. When the crime is solved talk with your students about the mystery genre and what they liked about the class mystery and why they would like mystery books.

This is also a good time to issue the Mystery Challenge and distribute the Mystery Challenge bookmarks. You may also use this opportunity to have the thief (or yourself) read your class a short mystery story. (See the suggested list below)

Fun Things to do Along the Way:

- Create a wanted poster for your missing item and place some around the school.
- Create a clue board in the classroom so students can identify what they already know and potential suspects.
- If you have a specific mystery book in mind you will be using for your unit, try to incorporate elements of that book into your classroom mystery so students will later recognize and identify more with the book.
- On a crime-solving day, invite students to wear two baseball caps with the brims opposite one another to create a detective hat. _ Study famous detectives and government agencies so students learn how real crimes are solved. (Tip: Guest speakers can really bring this to life.) _ Teach students how to dust for fingerprints. (See details below.) _ Provide mysterious food on the day the crime is solved. (See details below.)



Great Short Mystery Stories:

The Body Snatcher by Robert Louis Stevenson

The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow by Washington Irving

The Murders in the Rue Morgue by Edgar Allan Poe

Sherlock Holmes Stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Femme Sole by Dana Cameron

Handbaskets, Drawers and Killer Cold by Kaye George

The Worst Noel by Barb Goffman

On the House by Hank Phillippi Ryan

Death Will Trim Your Tree by Elizabeth Zelvin

Refreshments:

- Fill a muffin tin with cupcake papers. Put a jellybean or a few raisins in two of the papers. Fill all of the papers with muffin or cupcake batter and bake them. Give a prize to the two detectives who get the "jewels."
- Prepare other party foods, such as crackers and cheese or peanut butter-filled celery sticks. Serve them on a tray or cookie sheet labeled with a card that reads "Exhibit A" and tell your students they can "Eat the Evidence!"
- Try making your own rootbeer. The method of using dry ice makes a fun fogging effect kids really enjoy. (Check with school administration and adhere to all warnings when using dry ice)
- Blindfold the kids before serving snacks; then have them guess what they are eating.
- Purchase Mystery flavor Dum Dum suckers and have students guess what flavor they are eating.

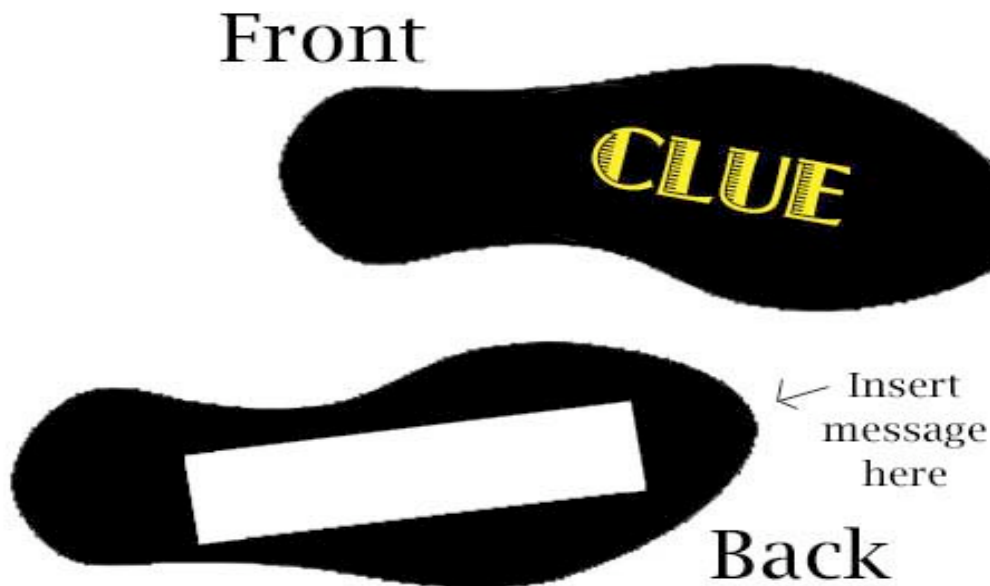


Dusting for Prints:

Dusting for prints is easy to do. You will need either talcum powder or cornstarch for dark surfaces and cocoa powder or dark eye shadow for light surfaces and soft bristled cosmetic brushes. Sprinkle the appropriate powder over the fingerprint and lightly use your brush to remove excess powder, revealing the print. After dusting the print evenly press clear tape over the print and lift from surface, then place tape on black or white paper. (Use opposite color paper to that of the print).

You can also use a method called fuming to reveal fingerprints on a surface. It is a little more complicated and time consuming but quite fun. You will need an aluminum pie plate or square of aluminum foil folded in fourths, a glass jar, superglue, and a smooth object like a pen or a marker lid. Wipe down object, and then hold it for a minute so that your fingers leave latent prints. Set the object inside the jar. Next, put several drops of superglue on the middle of the pie plate and turn the jar upside down over it. The strong chemical fumes from the cyanoacrylate in the glue will react with the residue from your fingers. You should see white fingerprint images on the object after a half hour or so. Professionals also use ninhydrin (which reacts with amino acids in latent prints) and silver nitrate powder developed under a UV light.

Clues:



Handout:

**Give a child a book too hard
and see him turn away.**

**Give a child a book that's dull
and watch her go and play.**

**But give a child a mystery
and soon you will discover**

**That they will beg you constantly
"Please, may I have another?!"**

