

CRIME SCENE #5 – The Deadly Picnic

Have you ever played the board game Clue? In this game, players gather information in order to determine the murderer, murder weapon, and crime scene. Actually, participants are not “guessing” when they play this game; they are using deductive reasoning. As players gather more information, they begin to put together the pieces of the mystery

Police investigators follow a process similar to that used in Clue. The investigators collect and evaluate evidence from a crime scene. All of the information they gather is compiled and placed in the criminal case file. As new evidence becomes available, it is added to the file.

Police investigators rarely learn about events in the same sequence in which they took place during the crime. Usually the leads are acquired in random order. Once a large portion of information is known, the police experts must sit down and put the pieces together, like you would assemble a jigsaw puzzle.

Deductive reasoning is the thought process that police investigators use to assemble the pieces of the criminal puzzle and reach a logical conclusion. In deductive reasoning, investigators utilize logical and critical-thinking skills to reach a conclusion.

THE DEADLY PICNIC

A Lab on Deductive Reasoning

Objective - You will use deductive reasoning to decide who committed the murder.

Background Information

Centerville police discovered the body of a 36-year-old white male (later identified as Gaven Brooks) in an open field of daisies about five miles outside of town. Mr. Brooks’s body was discovered at 10:02 PM. Friday night, October 11. He was found lying face up on a yellow, queen-size sheet. According to autopsy reports, one fatal gunshot to the back of the head ended Mr. Brooks’s life. Scientists estimate that death occurred at about 7:45 P.M.

As investigators scanned the crime scene, they made the following notes:

- Paper plates filled with partially eaten fried chicken, potato salad, and chocolate cake were located near Mr. Brooks’s body.
- An open bottle of red wine and two partially-filled glasses of wine were found next to the yellow sheet.
- One of the wine glasses had a smudge of red lipstick on the rim.
- A recently smoked cigarette butt was found near the sheet.
- Footprints from the road to the field were those of a male, size 10, and a female, size 5. The only footprints from the field back to the road were those of a female, size 5.
- Car tracks of the same wheel base and tread pattern as Mr. Brooks’s automobile were found at the road. The car was not found at the scene.
- Later that evening Mr. Brooks’s car was found abandoned in an empty parking lot in downtime Centerville.

Investigators believe that a female friend of Mr. Brooks was responsible for his demise. After questioning family and friends, it was discovered that the deceased had frequent social outings with six women who live in or near Centerville. The women’s names are Rita, Lauren, Gail, Janice, Elaine, and Peggy. In today’s lab you will answer these questions: Who was responsible for the murder? What events surrounded this murder?

Materials - Pencil

Procedure

1. After reading the Background Information, record some important pieces of information in Data Table 1.
2. Read the special notes (given below) that the police gathered during their investigation. Record this information in Data Table 2.
3. Special notes gathered by police investigation:
 - Janice works full time as a cosmetologist.
 - Elaine and Gail are school teachers.
 - Peggy and Elaine live together in a two-bedroom apartment in downtown Centerville.
 - Gail lives in a nearby town called Jordan.
 - Rita lives in a country house about three miles to the west of Centerville.
 - Elaine and Janice are very petite women—they wear size 4 blue jeans.
 - Gail and Janice are nonsmokers.
 - Janice works part time as an aerobics instructor at a health club in Centerville. She teaches a 7:30 P.M. step aerobics class each Friday night and has not missed a class in two years.
 - Peggy is deathly allergic to grapes.
 - Peggy doesn't wear lipstick.
 - Gail attends the aerobics class that Janice teaches. She has not missed a Friday night class in nine months.
 - Lauren works at a chemical supply house.
 - Rita's father owns a rifle range.
 - Lauren is allergic to all species of flowering plants.
 - Rita is a florist.
 - Rita doesn't wear lipstick.
 - Janice and Elaine have never met.
 - Janice and Gail hate the color yellow.
 - Lauren played center for a semi-professional basketball team five years ago. She has red hair and is 6-feet, 1-inch tall.

Postlab Questions

1. Who do you believe killed Mr. Brooks?
2. Cite key pieces of information that caused you to believe the other five women were innocent.
3. What information helped you identify the murderer?
4. On a sheet of paper, write a two paragraph story that describes what you believe happened on the night of the murder. Explain how the couple got to the murder site, why they went there, what happened while they were there, and how the murderer escaped. What do you believe was her motive?

Data Table 1

QUESTION	ANSWER
Description of location where body was found	
Approximate time and day of death	
Weapon used to inflict fatal wound	
Description of any footprints, tire prints, lip prints, etc., around the crime scene	
Description of objects found at or around the crime scene	
Any other pieces of evidence that may help solve this crime	

Data Table 2

	Comments on Size of Women	Occupation and Hobbies	City or Place she lives	Medical Information	Miscellaneous Information
Rita					
Lauren					
Gail					
Janice					
Peggy					
Elaine					

TEACHER NOTES AND KEY FOR LAB 1-7, *The Deadly Picnic*

1. Students need about 50 minutes to complete this lab.
2. Explain to students how to make good use of the data tables provided in this lab.
Encourage them to record vital information in these tables.

Data Tables and Conclusions

DATA TABLE 1

QUESTION	ANSWER
Description of location where body was found	In the daisy field outside of Centerville
Approximate time and day of death	7:45 P.M. on Friday night, October 11
Weapon used to inflict fatal wound	Gun (one shot to the head)
Description of any footprints, tire prints, lip prints, etc., around the crime scene	Size 10 men and size 5 women shoes going prints, etc., around the crime scene from road to the crime site and size 5 returning from site back to the road. Red lip print on wine glass Tire tracks belonging to deceased at road near site
Description of objects found at or around the crime scene	One cigarette but Partially eaten chicken, potato salad, cake, and wine Wine glass had lipstick stain
Any other pieces of evidence that may help solve this crime	Yellow queen-size sheet under food

DATA TABLE 2

	Comments on Size of Women	Occupation and Hobbies	City or Place she lives	Medical Information	Miscellaneous Information
Rita		florist	lives west of town in country		father owns shooting range; she never wears lipstick
Lauren	over six feet tall	works at chemical supply house; used to play semi-professional basketball		allergic to all flowering plants	
Gail		school teacher; attends aerobics each Friday night at 7:30	lives in Jordan, a nearby town to Centerville		hates the color yellow; non-smoker
Janice	wears size 4 jeans	cosmetologist; teaches aerobics each Friday night at 7:30			hates yellow; non-smoker
Peggy				allergic to grapes	never wears lipstick; roommate of Elaine
Elaine	wears size 4 jeans	school teacher	lives in downtown Centerville		roommate of Peggy

Answers to Postlab Questions

1. Elaine

2. Answers will vary but may include:

Rita: never wears lipstick; lives in the country

Lauren: has large feet; allergic to daisies

Gail hates yellow at aerobics on Friday, nonsmoker

Janice teaches aerobics on Friday night, hates yellow, nonsmoker

Peggy: allergic to grapes; never wears lipstick

3. Lives downtown; has small feet

4. Stories will vary See example below:

Elaine and Mr. Brooks had a date for a picnic on Friday night. Elaine volunteered to bring the sheet for the picnic if Mr. Brooks provided the food and wine. He picked up Elaine at about 6:00 PM. They went to the picnic area out in the country. Elaine was jealous of Mr. Brooks's relationship with her roommate. She took a gun to the picnic for revenge. Elaine and Mr. Brooks walked down to the field of daisies and spread out their sheet for the food. They got everything out and began eating and drinking. Elaine took out the gun and shot Mr. Brooks in the head. She ran back up to the road where they left his car. She drove herself back to town and abandoned his car in a parking lot that was vacant. From here she walked a few blocks to her apartment.