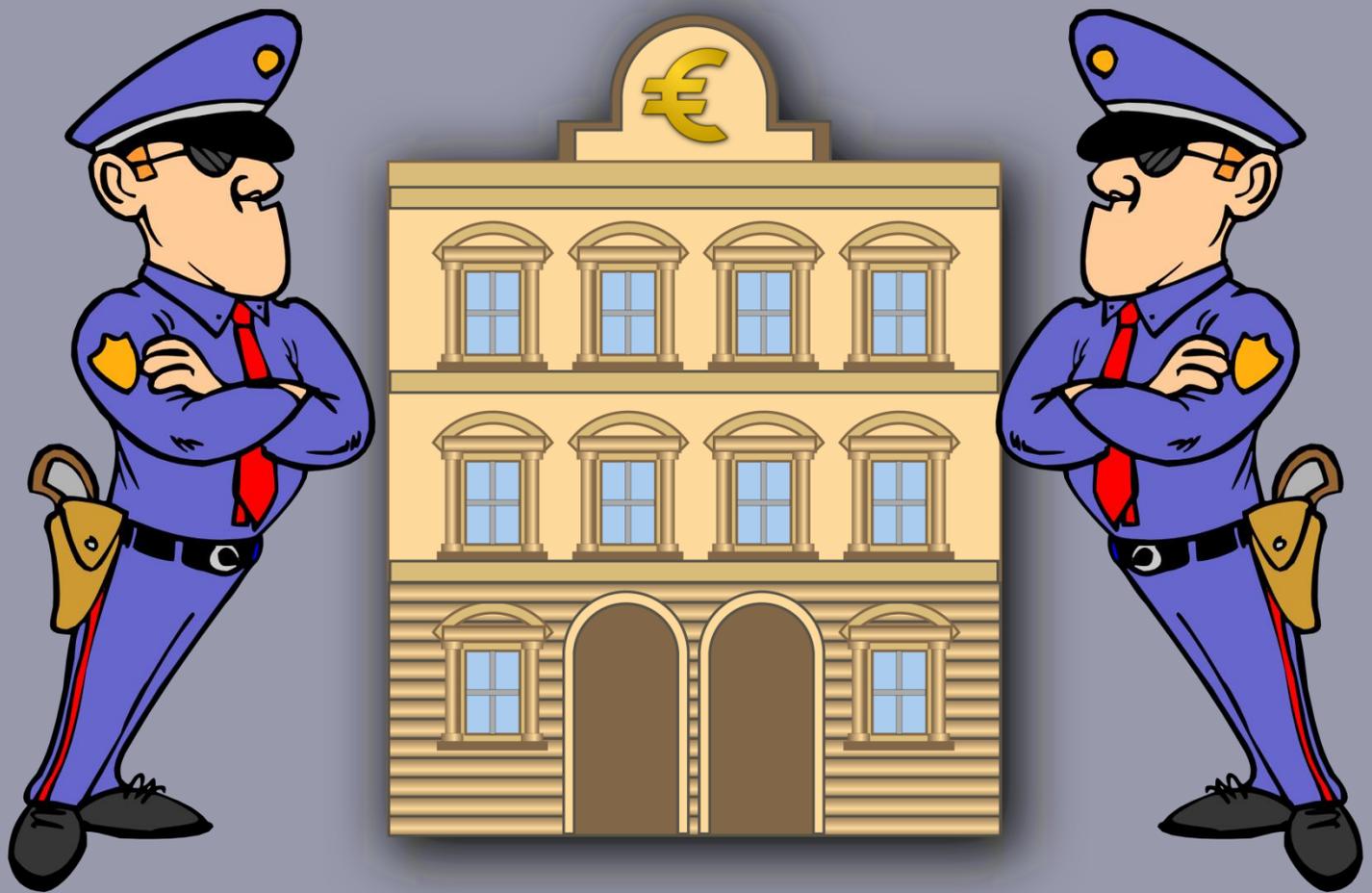


The Empty Bank

A Clue by Clue Mystery



An ESL / ELA Activity to
practice critical thinking and
close reading

What is a Clue by Clue?

Clue by Clues make great warm-up activities, fillers, or time killers for those last minutes of class and early finishers. They can be critical reading activities that teach students to **read closely** for details, **synthesize information** from different sources, apply **prior knowledge** about the world, and to **recognize the logic** of a claim and evaluate its validity.

They are also a lot of fun!

While students are solving the mysteries they are also developing their spoken language skills, such as:

- **Modal verbs of speculation:** She must have forgotten her keys, It could have been the butler
- **Opinion language:** I think...., I'm positive..., I'm not sure...
- **Hedging:** It's possible, probably, maybe, it's not impossible.
- **Conclusions:** That means that...
- **Emphasis:** There's no way that...
- **Hypotheticals:** What if he didn't do it, If he was at the movies, he couldn't have done it.

How to Use Clue by Clues

1. To prepare, make one copy of the student page for each pair or small group of students.
2. Cut out the clue strips for each group and make a small stack, being careful to preserve the order.
3. In class, put students into pairs or small groups.
4. Hand out the situation and read it to them as they read along. Go over the guest list and make sure everyone understands the names and relationships.
5. Give them 3-5 minutes to discuss what might have happened. In more advanced groups, students could begin talking about what information they need to know,

Clue by Clue Teacher Notes

and even forming questions they need the clues to answer. You may want to have the groups appoint a secretary to keep track of theories.

6. Give each group the first clue and let them read it. Alternatively, you could project the clues one by one on a class screen, or write them up on the board.
7. Give each group 3-7 minutes to speculate on the meaning of the clue and what they think happened. Monitor the groups to help with comprehension and also to gauge when students have exhausted the new information. If needed, you can remind students how the new clue relates to older clues.
8. Hand out the second clue and again give them 3-7 minutes to speculate on the clue and how their opinion may have changed. Many clues are significant only in tandem with other earlier clues. Often a clue will either confirm or refute an earlier clue. Encourage students to go back through clues and even lay related clues out next to each other.
9. Once they have gone through all the clues, have the students discuss all the evidence as a whole. Students can stay in their groups, or you can put two small groups together to make new and larger groups. For longer mysteries, you could organize a sort of mock-trial or mock police investigation based on the evidence.
10. Then ask each student to say what they think happened. Be sure to encourage students to speak in detail. It's not enough for them to say they think Suspect One is guilty. They need to give reasons. As with many mysteries, there is often a short list of suspects so guessing is easy.
11. Hand out the bottom half of the worksheet with the solution or put it up on the board. Ask students how plausible they find the solution. Then reveal that this was actually a true story! Ask students if they know any other funny crime stories.

The Empty Bank

The Situation

In the middle of the night, ten police cars drove up to a bank and surrounded it. They began calling for everyone in the bank to come out with their hands up. When no one answered, they entered the bank and discovered that no one was inside it. Why did they do this?

Hints

- Did anyone leave the bank before the police came?
- Did anyone leave the bank after the police came?
- Why did the police think someone was in the bank?
- Could they have made a mistake?

The Solution

The resident and the police saw an advertisement inside the bank. The advertisement was a cardboard cutout of a person, so they thought they saw a person. In fact, there was no one in the bank except for this cut out.

The Empty Bank

Police surround a bank but there's no one inside it!

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The Clues

1. A local resident passed by the bank at night and saw someone inside. She phoned the police.
2. When the police entered the bank, all alarms were on and working perfectly.
3. No one had tripped the alarms all night
4. When the police arrived they also saw a figure inside the bank.
5. There is only one exit to the bank and the police saw no one leave
6. When police called for anyone in the bank to come out, the figure did not move.
7. In fact, the figure did not move at all the whole night.

THANK YOU!

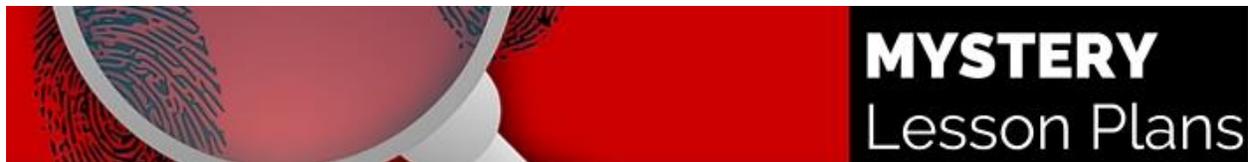
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