

Clue by Clue Mysteries: Critical Thinking Activities

What are Clue by Clues

Clue by Clues are fun mystery games I came up with to share my love of solving mysteries with my classes. They also are perfect critical thinking activities! Clue by Clues make great warm-up activities, fillers, or time killers for those last minutes of class and early finishers.

Students work in small groups to solve a puzzle or mystery. The catch is that they are given each clue one at a time. This slows down the mystery solving process, meaning students spend more time discussing each clue and revising their theories. And that means more time using critical thinking skills. It also means more talk time as students discuss the importance of each clue and reevaluate their previous ideas. And of course, try to persuade others of their point of view.

Each Clue by Clue Activity is available to download and print. Inside you'll find an introduction to the mystery for students to read, clue cards to distribute to students, hints to help them along, a full solution, and some follow-up discussion questions to extend the lesson. Each activity comes with complete teacher notes on how to use it.

Why Clue by Clues?

Research shows that a good critical thinking activity is one where students evaluate a range of facts and opinions (Moore and Parker, 1986), combine ideas in various ways (Smith, Ward and Finke, 1995),

use complex thinking patterns (Feldman, 1997), and express or defend their opinions with evidence (Lipman, 1988).

Solving a mystery helps students practice all those critical thinking skills by noticing clues, evaluating evidence, synthesizing information from different clues, applying logic, and then explaining their solution. And to do that they have to use their close reading skills, as well.

Furthermore, 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.*

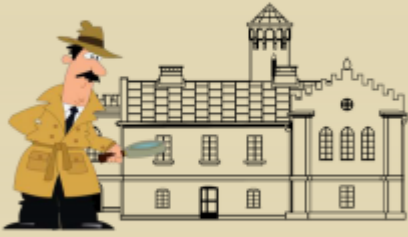
And of course, students love mysteries! Reading and solving them are a lot of fun!

So check out the collection. Each one is low-prep and ready to use in class today. Click on the pictures below for more information and a preview before you download and buy them.

My Clue by Clue Mystery Critical Thinking Activities

Murder of a Millionaire

A Clue by Clue Mystery



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

Imprisoned!

A Clue by Clue Mystery



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

The Perfect Crime

A Clue by Clue Mystery



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

The Odd Elevator

A Clue by Clue Mystery



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

An Unrelated Murder

A Clue by Clue Mystery



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

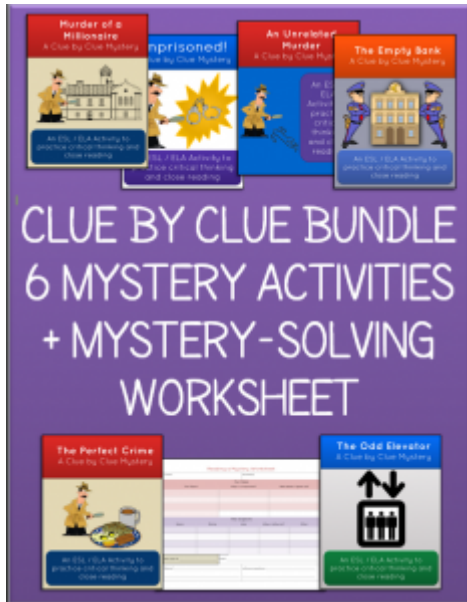
The Break-In

A Clue by Clue Mystery



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

Or save money! Get all 6 in one bundle for the price of 4!



Clue by Clue: Murder of a Millionaire

[Clue by Clue: Murder of a Millionaire](#) is one of my favorite mystery activities. It's an original mystery reminiscent of Agatha Christie. A wealthy businessman having a dinner party at his country house is found murdered. The catch? The room was locked from the inside!

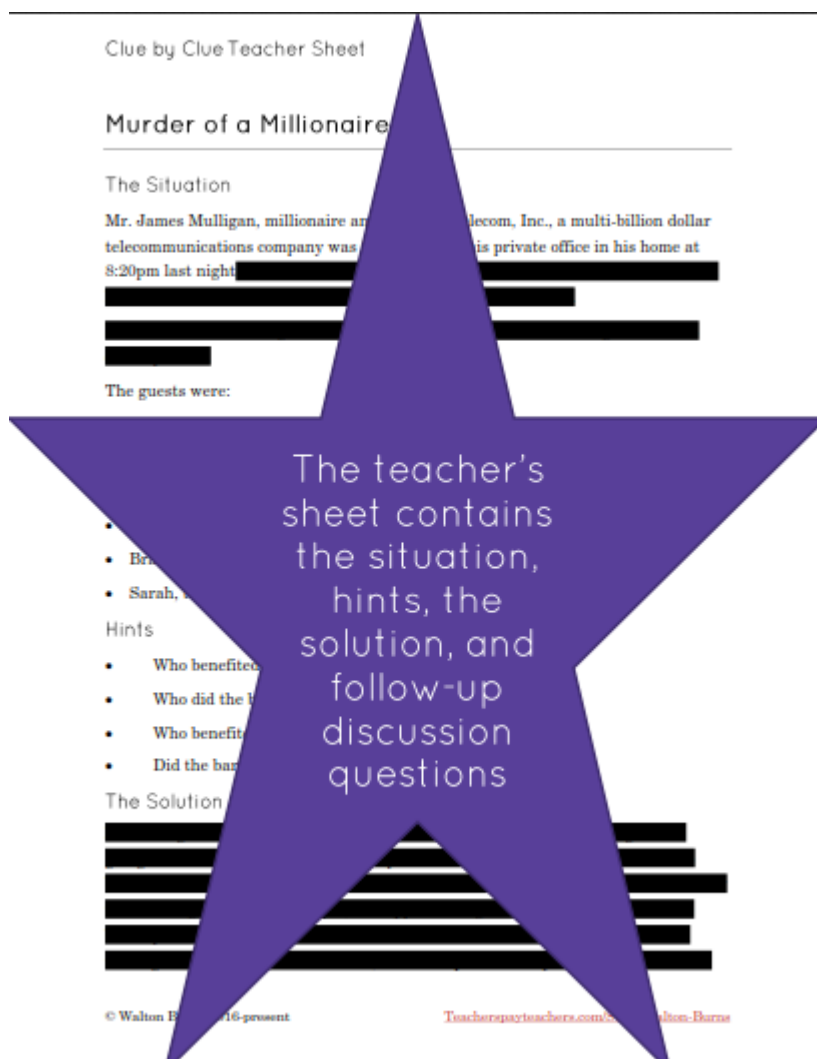
Who did it?

His wife, who found out he was cheating on her? The secretive maid? His own business partner? You give the students the clues one by one. By the end, they have all the information they need to solve it.

Murder of a Millionaire is the longest [Clue By Clue](#), with 22 clues. As with all clue by clue mysteries, students are given the situation to analyze. They are then given the clue cards, one at a time. In pairs or small groups, students analyze each clue to try to decide if it's

relevant or irrelevant and what it means. It's a great way for students to practice critical thinking skills, such as evaluating evidence, synthesizing information from different clues, and also telling truth from lie and fact from opinion. (Check out my post on [Why short mysteries make awesome critical thinking activities](#) for more and a list of all my clue by clue activities).

Previews



The Teacher Sheet with the Situation, Hints and the Solution.

The Clues

1) Mr. Mulligan collected old weapons and put them on his office wall. One sword was missing when he was found.
2) Dinner ended at 7:30pm, at which time Sarah went out to the balcony to watch the shooting stars. Sarah went to the kitchen to wash the dishes and she stayed there until 8:15pm when she heard the loud crash. She came running to see what had happened.
3) At 7:35pm, Mr. Mulligan and Mrs. Mulligan went to the office saying they had some private business. They went directly to the safe in the office.
4) The safe was empty when Mr. Mulligan returned to the office at 8:00pm. He returned to the office at 8:00pm, unlocked the door and shouting for Mr. Mulligan.
5) The missing sword was found in the bathroom. A note was pinned to the wall. It said, "I am sorry. James and I have been seeing each other. Please forgive me..."
6) The last person to see Mr. Mulligan was Mrs. Mulligan. She said, "I saw him go to the bathroom. He returned to the office at 8:00pm. He returned to the office at 8:00pm, unlocked the door and shouting for Mr. Mulligan."
7) Police found a note pinned to the wall. It said, "I am sorry. James and I have been seeing each other. Please forgive me..."
8) Dinner had been served at 7:30pm. Mrs. Mulligan said, "I saw him go to the bathroom. He returned to the office at 8:00pm. He returned to the office at 8:00pm, unlocked the door and shouting for Mr. Mulligan."
9) The missing sword was found in the bathroom. A note was pinned to the wall. It said, "I am sorry. James and I have been seeing each other. Please forgive me..."
10) Sarah told Mrs. Mulligan that she saw Mr. Mulligan go to the bathroom. She said, "I saw him go to the bathroom. He returned to the office at 8:00pm. He returned to the office at 8:00pm, unlocked the door and shouting for Mr. Mulligan."

Can your students use the clues to figure out what happened?

One page of the clues to cut out and give to the students one by one.

Download Murder of a Millionaire

So, head over to my Teachers Pay Teachers Store to [purchase Clue by Clue: Murder of a Millionaire](#) Mystery Activity!

Or check out the other [Clue by Clue Mystery Activities](#).

You can also visit my ever-growing section of [mystery activities and lesson plans](#) for other classroom resources, including a graphic organizer and story cards to help students write their own mysteries.