



ACTIVITY LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

THE BOOK THAT WASN'T THERE

Turn your library or classroom into a detective agency! Participants work in small groups to investigate the disappearance of a much-anticipated library book. Along the way, they'll examine suspect statements, reconstruct a timeline, study photographic evidence, consider motive, and decide whether witnesses are always as reliable as they seem. *The mystery works best with small groups of 3–5 participants.*

Setup Options

One Group

Work through the investigation together, as a group. Reveal one stage at a time and go through the Detective Packet together.

Quick & Easy (Tabletop Investigation)

Give each group their Detective Packet. Then distribute or display each new stage (page) of evidence when they are ready for it. Groups remain at their tables and work through the investigation together.

Evidence Stations

Place each stage (page) of evidence at a different location around the room or library. When groups finish one stage, direct them to the next evidence station.

Clue Hunt—*Recommended*

Print each stage (page) on a different color of paper. Cut apart evidence that contains multiple clues, then create 17 clue locations throughout the library. At each location, place one copy of the same clue for every group. Teams search only for the color assigned to their current stage.

The Stages

There are seven stages of evidence, as listed on the next page. Colors have been assigned for explanation purposes only. Use any colored paper you wish.

Continued on the next page.



INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED

1. The Suspects: four clues (blue paper)
2. Suspect Statements: four clues (yellow paper)
3. The Timeline: four clues (red paper)
4. Photo Evidence #1: one clue (white paper)
5. Photo Evidence #2: one clue (white paper)
6. The Wait List: one clue (purple paper)
7. Final Statements: two clues (green paper)

Stages 4 and 5

Stages 4 and 5 share page 9 in this packet. They should be cut out and presented as evidence separately. Since they are photographic evidence, they work best on white paper.

Keep Photo #1 and Photo #2 face down until their stages begin, and make sure they are clearly labeled #1 and #2.

1 Choose Your Setup

Decide which setup you'd like to use. Find the applicable instructions at the end of this packet. Update them as needed and add them to the Detective Packets.

Note: The instructions that follow focus on the Clue Hunt but are sometimes applicable to all setups.

2 Prepare the Investigation

Before your detectives arrive, prepare for the investigation.

If you have chosen the Clue Hunt setup, prepare one copy of each clue for every group. For example, let's pretend there are four groups. For the second stage, you will place four copies of Jordan's statement in one spot, four copies of Mateo's statement in another spot, four copies of Maya's statement in another spot, and four copies of Nia's statement in a fourth spot.

Place all clues for every stage.

Continued on the next page.



INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED

3 Prepare the Detectives

When your participants arrive, divide them into small groups. Give each group a Detective Packet. Go over the first page (Case File) together. For your convenience, it is also on page 5 of this packet.

From there, your detectives can follow the written instructions and work independently. (Be sure to tell them which color to look for during each stage.) Or you can narrate the investigation and take them through each stage together.

Remind detectives not to share discoveries or solutions with other groups.

4 After the Investigation

Each group should complete a Final Accusation and give it to you at Detective Headquarters. Ask groups not to announce their solution so other investigators can finish the case.

If the accusation is correct: Mark it as CASE CLOSED. Ask the group to keep the solution confidential until the final reveal.

If the accusation is incorrect: Do not reveal the answer. Tell them: CASE STILL OPEN. Return to the evidence and take another look. Allow the group to reconsider its theory and submit a revised accusation.

5 Solution

Nia Brooks took *The Queen's Scarab*.

Continued on the next page.



INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED

The timeline establishes the order in which the suspects left:

3:18 — Jordan

3:19 — Mateo

3:20 — Nia

3:21 — Maya

Photo #1 shows Mateo just outside the library without the book or a backpack large enough to conceal it. **Mateo couldn't have taken the book.**

Photo #2 contains the more important discovery: *The Queen's Scarab* can still be seen on the new-books table in the background. Jordan left before Mateo, so **Jordan could not have taken the book.** It also proves that Mateo was mistaken that the book was already gone.

The Wait List appears to point toward Maya. Nia is first in line, while Maya is #17 and could wait eight months. Maya seems to have the stronger motive to take it.

But Nia gives herself away in her final statement. Earlier, Nia insisted that she merely looked at *The Queen's Scarab* and didn't even pick it up. In her final statement, however, she talks about Abby finding strange temporary tattoos and putting one on—information she could only know from reading the book.

6 Conclusion

When all groups have solved the case—or when your allotted investigation time has ended—share this with the group:

“Nia took the book home. She had seen that she was first on the waiting list and mistakenly believed the new copy was hers to take. After learning her mistake—and that taking it could cost her borrowing privileges and her place on the wait list—she panicked and lied about what had happened.”

NOTE: For the Clue Hunt, make sure all evidence has been returned to its original location (or any location as long as the matching copies of clues are together) and that each clue station has enough copies for the next group of detectives. Your current detectives can help reset the case.



CASE FILE

THE BOOK THAT WASN'T THERE

Your Mission

A copy of *The Queen's Scarab* has disappeared from the library—and this isn't just any book. Readers have been waiting months for it. The wait list is so long that some people may have to wait nearly eight months for their turn.

The new copy arrived yesterday. It was placed on the library's new-books table while it was being processed. It wasn't ready to be checked out yet, but a short time later, the book was gone.

Four people were in the library when the book could have disappeared. Each of them wanted to read *The Queen's Scarab*. Each of them had a chance to take it.

What We Know

- *The Queen's Scarab* is a new release. No one had access to the book until this copy arrived at the library yesterday.
- The book was placed on the new-books table.
- Four possible suspects were in the library before it disappeared.
- By the time the librarian realized the book was missing, all four had left.
- Library policy: Anyone who removes a book without checking it out loses borrowing privileges and is removed from the wait list.

Your Job

Examine each piece of evidence as it becomes available. Keep track of what you learn. By the end of the investigation, you'll need to answer two questions:

1. Who took *The Queen's Scarab*?
2. What evidence proves it?



THE SUSPECTS

Jordan Kim

Jordan is a teen volunteer at the library. Yesterday, Jordan was helping return books and organize the new-books area.

Jordan knew exactly where *The Queen's Scarab* had been placed and had easy access to the table.

Mateo Ruiz

Mateo writes book reviews for the school newspaper. He hoped to be one of the first people to read *The Queen's Scarab* so he could review it before anyone else.

Mateo was in the library during the timeframe when the book disappeared.

Maya Shah

Maya leads a fantasy book club and plans to discuss *The Queen's Scarab*. She stopped at the library yesterday hoping to find out when she might get a copy.

Maya was reportedly the last of the four suspects to leave the library.

Nia Brooks

Nia loves fantasy books and has been asking about *The Queen's Scarab* for months. She stopped by the library yesterday afternoon shortly after the new copy arrived.

Nia says she looked at the new-books table but left without the book.



SUSPECT STATEMENTS

Jordan Kim

“I was volunteering yesterday, mostly returning books and straightening shelves. I knew *The Queen’s Scarab* had arrived because I saw it on the new-books table. When my shift ended, I signed out and headed home. The library still had three people in it when I left.”

Mateo Ruiz

“I wanted to know if *The Queen’s Scarab* was here. I plan to review it for the school newspaper. I also spent some time on one of the library computers. When I left, I glanced at the new-books table. I’m pretty sure the book was gone.”

Maya Shah

“My book club wants to read *The Queen’s Scarab*, so I stopped to ask how long the wait is. It sounded like months. I stayed for a while after that, looking at other books. I was the last person to leave. When I looked at the new-books table, *The Queen’s Scarab* wasn’t there.”

Nia Brooks

“I stopped at the library yesterday because I’d been waiting forever for *The Queen’s Scarab*. I saw the new-books display, but I didn’t stay very long. I looked at the book, but I didn’t even pick it up. A few minutes later, I went home.”



THE TIMELINE

Library Volunteer Sign-Out Sheet

Name: Jordan Kim

Time Out: 3:18 p.m.

Jordan's volunteer shift ended at 3:18. Everyone present saw him walk out the door. He was holding a bag in his hands.

Witness: Mr. Lewis

Mr. Lewis said, "I saw Mateo coming out of the library yesterday afternoon. I stopped him to take his picture for the school newspaper. I remember looking at the clock. It was 3:19 p.m. He wasn't carrying anything, but he might have had a backpack on."

Book Club Sign-In Sheet

Maya had a short planning meeting immediately after leaving the library.

Name: Maya Shah

Arrival: 3:21 p.m.

Text Message

Nia's father was waiting outside to pick her up.

3:20 p.m.

Nia's father: I'm here. Never mind... I see you coming.



YOU SOLVE THE MYSTERY



PHOTO EVIDENCE



Photo #1

Photo #2



Close-up of
Photo #1



THE WAIT LIST

Wait List

The library provided part of the current hold list for *The Queen's Scarab*.

1. Nia Brooks
2. Avery Johnson
3. Lucas Martin
4. Zoe Chen
5. Eli Thompson
6. Sofia Garcia
7. Noah Williams
8. Emma Davis
9. Caleb Brown
10. Lily Nguyen
11. Jackson Miller
12. Mia Anderson
13. Owen Wilson
14. Grace Lee
15. Henry Clark
16. Ella Martinez
17. Maya Shah

Current estimated wait for readers near the bottom of the list: approximately eight months.



FINAL STATEMENTS

Maya Shah

“I know it looks bad because I was the last one to leave. And, yes, I really wanted that book. My book club has been talking about it for weeks, and I might have to wait eight months.

“But I didn’t take it. When I looked at the new-books table before I left, *The Queen’s Scarab* was already gone.”

Nia Brooks

“I saw that *The Queen’s Scarab* arrived, but I’ve waited months already. Why would I take it when I’m first on the waiting list?

“It’s like Abby in the story. She finds these weird temporary tattoos and puts one on. Why would she do that?”



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THE BOOK THAT WASN'T THERE

One Group

1. Read the Case File together.
2. Review the **Suspect Profiles**. Discuss who seems suspicious and why.
3. Review the **Suspect Statements**. Discuss what each suspect claims happened.
4. Review the **Timeline** evidence. Work together to determine the order in which Jordan, Mateo, Nia, and Maya left the library.
5. Review **Photo Evidence #1**. Study the photograph and discuss what it reveals.
6. Review **Photo Evidence #2**. Study the photograph and discuss what it reveals.
7. Review the **Wait List**. Discuss how this affects the investigation.
8. Review the **Final Statements**.
9. Complete the Final Accusation.
10. If the accusation is incorrect, the case is still open. Review the evidence and try again.
11. When the case has been solved—or when the allotted time has ended—discuss the solution and how the evidence fits together.

Remember to keep the mystery a secret, so future groups also get to enjoy the mystery.



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THE BOOK THAT WASN'T THERE

Tabletop Investigation

1. Read the Case File together.
2. Review the **Suspect Profiles**. (Evidence might be on your table, or it might be handed out.)
3. Discuss with your group who seems suspicious and why. Fill in your Detective Packet.
4. Review the **Suspect Statements**.
5. Discuss what each suspect claims happened. Fill in your Detective Packet.
6. Review the **Timeline** evidence.
7. Determine the order in which Jordan, Mateo, Maya, and Nia left the library. Fill in your Detective Packet.
8. Review **Photo Evidence #1**.
9. Discuss what it reveals. Fill in your Detective Packet.
10. Review **Photo Evidence #2**.
11. Discuss what it reveals. Fill in your Detective Packet.
12. Review the **Wait List**.
13. Discuss how this affects the investigation. Fill in your Detective Packet.
14. Review the **Final Statements**.
15. Work together to complete the Final Accusation.
16. Turn in your Final Accusation to the activity leader.
17. If the accusation is incorrect, the case is still open. Review the evidence and try again.
18. When the case has been solved by every group—or when the allotted time has ended—discuss the solution and how the evidence fits together.

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Evidence Stations

1. Read the Case File together.
2. Go to the **Suspect Profiles** station. Gather the evidence. Bring it back to your headquarters.
3. Review it. Discuss with your group who seems suspicious. Fill in your Detective Packet.
4. Continue to the **Suspect Statements** station. Repeat the process.
5. Discuss what each suspect claims happened. Fill in your Detective Packet.
6. Continue to the **Timeline** evidence station.
7. Determine the order in which Jordan, Mateo, Maya, and Nia left the library. Fill in your Detective Packet.
8. Continue to the **Photo Evidence #1** station.
9. Discuss what it reveals. Fill in your Detective Packet.
10. Continue to the **Photo Evidence #2** station.
11. Discuss what it reveals. Fill in your Detective Packet.
12. Continue to the **Wait List** station.
13. Discuss how this affects the investigation. Fill in your Detective Packet.
14. Continue to the **Final Statements** station.
15. Work with your group to complete the Final Accusation.
16. Turn in your Final Accusation to the activity leader.
17. If the accusation is incorrect, the case is still open. Review the evidence and try again.
18. When the case has been solved by every group—or when the allotted time has ended—discuss the solution and how the evidence fits together.

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Clue Hunt

1. Read the Case File together.
2. Begin your clue hunt by finding all four **Suspect Profiles**, printed on _____ paper. Gather the evidence. Bring it back to your headquarters.
3. Review it. Discuss with your group who seems suspicious. Fill in your Detective Packet.
4. Find all four **Suspect Statements**, printed on _____ paper. Repeat the process.
5. Discuss what each suspect claims happened. Fill in your Detective Packet.
6. Find all four pieces of **Timeline** evidence, printed on _____ paper.
7. Determine the order in which Jordan, Mateo, Maya, and Nia left the library. Fill in your Detective Packet.
8. Find **Photo Evidence #1***, printed on _____ paper. Look for #1 on the paper.
9. Discuss what it reveals. Fill in your Detective Packet.
10. Find **Photo Evidence #2***, printed on _____ paper. Look for #2 on the paper.
11. Discuss what it reveals. Fill in your Detective Packet.
12. Find the **Wait List*** evidence, printed on _____ paper.
13. Discuss how this affects the investigation. Fill in your Detective Packet.
14. Find the two **Final Statements** evidence, printed on _____ paper.
15. Work with your group to complete the Final Accusation.
16. Turn in your Final Accusation to the activity leader.
17. If the accusation is incorrect, the case is still open. Review the evidence and try again.
18. When the case has been solved by every group—or when the allotted time has ended—discuss the solution and how the evidence fits together.

*There is one piece of evidence to find in steps 8, 10, and 12.

Remember to keep the mystery a secret, so the other groups and future groups also get to enjoy the mystery.