

Columbo

The purposes of this activity are to : 1) encourage group members to elicit information and opinions from all members, 2) cause both the timid and the aggressive class members to recognize and act according to their responsibilities to the class and 3) make the whole class aware of the necessity for decision-making concerning the appropriate means with which to tackle a problem

To Run This Activity

1. Cut up the list of clues so that each student can be given one or more clues.
2. The students are seated in a circle with the teacher standing outside the group.
3. The teacher gives the following explanation: “Today we are going to play a game that will help improve your discussion skills. Each of the pieces of paper I am holding contains one clue that will help you solve a bank robbery and the use of all clues is essential if the problem is to be solved. The Imperial Bank of Commerce (Southville Branch) was robbed of \$1,000,000. You must find out “who did it”. If you put all the facts together, you will be able to solve the case. Anytime you think you know the answer, and the group agrees on the guess, you may tell me. I will tell only whether the answer is wrong or right; I will not tell you if you are partially right or wrong. You may organize yourselves in any way you like. You may not, however, pass your clues around or show them to anyone else, and you may not leave your seats to walk around the group. All sharing of clues and ideas must be done verbally.”
4. After clarifying the rules, pass out the clues. If there are more than 29 students, make up extra clues or have some students share clues.
5. Students should be appointed to serve as observers and timekeepers. The observers can make suggestions about how the group could be better organized and work faster.
6. The teacher stands unobtrusively in the back-ground, indicating the passing of time on the blackboard. He should not interrupt, make suggestions, or give hints, unless the class is clearly “bogged down”.

List of Clues

1. The robbery was discovered at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, November 12. The bank had closed at 4:00 p.m. the previous day.
2. Miss Margaret Ellington, a teller at the bank, discovered the robbery.
3. The vault of the bank had been blasted open by dynamite.
4. The president of the bank, Mr. Albert Greenbags, left before the robbery was discovered. He was arrested by authorities at the Mexico City airport at noon on Friday, November 12.
5. The president of the bank had been having trouble with his wife, who spent all of his money. He had frequently talked of leaving her.
6. The front door of the bank had been opened with a key.
7. The only keys to the bank were held by the janitor and the president of the bank.
8. Miss Ellington often borrowed the president's key to open the bank early when she had an extra amount of work to do.
9. Mr. Smith was found by the O.P.P. in Dogwalk, ON, on November 12. He had arrived there via Air Canada Flight 414, at 4:00 p.m. on the 11th.
10. The airline clerk confirmed the time of Smith's arrival.
11. Mr. Greenbags was the only person who had a key to the vault.
12. There were no planes out of Southville between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.
13. In addition to keeping payroll records, Mr. Ellington was in charge of the dynamite supplies of the Acme Construction Company.

14. Mr. Greenbag's half-brother, Arthur Nodough, had always been jealous of his brother.
15. Nodough always goes drunk on Friday nights.
16. Arthur Nodough appeared in Chicago on Monday, November 8, waving a lot of money.
17. Arthur wanted to marry Camelia Smith.
18. Miss Ellington said that Smith had often flirted with her.
19. Mr. Smith's father, a gold prospector in Alaska, had died in September.
20. Mr. Greenbags waited in the terminal at O'Hara Field in Chicago for 16 hours because of engine trouble on the plane he was to take to Mexico City.
21. A strange, hippie-type person had been hanging around the bank on Thursday, November 11, watching employees and customers.
22. A substantial amount of dynamite had been stolen from the Acme Construction Company on Wednesday, November 10.
23. An Acme employee, Howard Ellington, said that a hippie had been hanging around the construction company on Wednesday afternoon.
24. The hippie-type character, whose name was Dirsey Flowers and who had recently dropped out of North Bay Teachers' College, was found by police in East Birdwatch, about ten miles from Zoo Saint Murray.
25. Dirsey Flowers was carrying \$500 when police apprehended him and had thrown a package into the river as the police approached.
26. Anastasia Wallflower of East Birdwatch, said that she had bought \$500 worth of genuine Indian love beads from Dirsey Flowers for resale in her boutique in downtown East Birdwatch.

27. Anastasia said that Dirsey had spent the night of November 11th at the home of her parents and left after a pleasant breakfast on the morning of the 12th.
28. When police tried to locate the janitor of the bank, Elwood Smith, he had apparently disappeared.
29. Miss Ellington stated that her brother Howard, when strolling to Taylor's Diner for coffee about 11:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 11, had seen Mr. Smith running from the bank.

Answer to Columbo

The Ellingtons collaborated to rob the bank.

Miss Ellington supplied the front door key (borrowed from Mr. Greenbags) and Howard supplied the dynamite. Greenbags had already left for Brazil when the robbery took place. Mr. Smith was in Hooterville on the night of the robbery. Dirsey Flowers was at the home of Anastasia's parents. There was no evidence that Arthur Nodough was connected with the robbery in any way.