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About the Author

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About This Book

Vocabulary is a key component of this collection of fun mysteries for grades 5 – 12. Each activity features between 18 and 25 vocabulary words and every one of them has the potential to implicate or exonerate a suspect. Solving the mysteries requires the reader to evaluate vocabulary words and to analyze and synthesize pieces of information. Critical thinking improves as students assess evidence found through reading comprehension and deductive and inductive thinking skills.

A second activity gives versatility to the vocabulary words as students practice using them in a context outside of a crime. Readers choose an appropriate word from the activity's word list to complete a sentence. When the word lists contain synonyms, students have flexibility in their choices.

These activities and their vocabulary words are not easy, but don't despair. If you take the time to decipher the unknown words and reread, you'll have sharper critical thinking skills and an expanded vocabulary.

How to Solve These Mysteries

- Read each activity carefully and keep in mind all statements are true.
- Each activity establishes two to three parameters for identifying the culprit. Consider the parameters as you evaluate the statements from the suspects and witnesses.
- Remember every vocabulary word is important to solving the mystery. Consult a dictionary as needed for definitions.
- As you look up words, realize which words are synonyms and antonyms of each other.
- Make notes when you find evidence. Synthesizing more than one piece of evidence can often establish innocence or guilt.
- Use a process of elimination to narrow down suspects.

Read the mystery below to find evidence to identify the innocent and guilty suspects. Remember, the story and suspects' statements are true.

The Cunning Customer

¹On December 1 of this year, Jennison City Police investigated the theft of a bracelet from Jennison's Fine Jewelry. ²The bracelet disappeared between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. from a display on the jewelry counter. ³Police interviewed four witnesses. ⁴The first witness said the thief was not a devout customer of the store. ⁵The second witness said the theft transpired while the sales associate heeded a persnickety customer's tirade. ⁶A third witness said the sales associate abetted the thief before she attended to the exacting customer.

⁷Police took the statements from the four suspects listed below. ⁸After weighing the evidence, police arrested one of the suspects, who later confessed, and police retrieved the bracelet from her possession later that day.



Margaret Mathers

⁹"I was interested in some jewelry but deferred my own questions to the staff until the fastidious customer finished her rant. ¹⁰I saw Helen Speath enter the store amid the harangue."



Helen Speath

¹¹"The store is not a haunt of mine. ¹²I was looking for a gift and came to the store based on the recommendation of a co-worker. ¹³I have no convictions about the harried sales associate who left my queries unresolved."



Anna Knox

¹⁴"I am a stalwart fixture in the store and recommended it to my friend, Margaret Mathers. ¹⁵Since then, she has become an inveterate patron."



Angela Payne

¹⁶"I sporadically shop in the store. ¹⁷I found the sales associate to be obliging even though the store was bustling. ¹⁸I can attest to the moiling attention the finicky customer necessitated."

Based on the evidence, circle the suspect who is the Cunning Customer.

After solving the case, write the best vocabulary word to complete each sentence. Each word can only be used once.

| | | | | |
|------------|----------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| abet | harangue | persnickety | devout | exacting |
| fastidious | query | bustling | inveterate | necessitate |
| obliging | attest | heed | stalwart | transpire |
| amid | harried | sporadically | | |

1. During the summer, the beach is _____ with tourists.
2. The _____ host provided us with excellent accommodations.
3. The _____ fan never misses a basketball game.
4. The collector saw the treasures _____ the junk.
5. The impressive trophy _____ a custom-built case.
6. Please direct all _____ to the information desk.
7. The guide advised the tourists to _____ all posted signs.
8. The architect prepared multiple designs for the _____ client.
9. _____ habits can be difficult to break.
10. Pop-up rain showers happen _____ without warning.
11. The loud _____ drew stares from bystanders.
12. The clueless substitute unknowingly _____ the class troublemaker.
13. After a barrage of questions, the speaker became _____.
14. I can _____ to the applicant's strong work ethic.
15. The event _____ while I was absent.

The Cunning Customer (pages 24-25)



Margaret Mathers



Helen Speath



Anna Knox



Angela Payne

The Innocent

Margaret Mathers: In sentence 6, we learn that the third witness saw the thief being assisted by the sales associate before attending to the exacting customer. This is the same customer that is described in sentence 5 as persnickety and launched a tirade just before the theft. In sentence 9, we learn that Mathers deferred to ask a question until the fastidious customer finished her rant. In sentence 4, the first witness states that the thief was not a devout shopper at the store. In sentence 15, Knox calls Mathers an inveterate (habitual) patron. This proves Margaret Mathers' innocence.

Helen Speath: In sentence 10, Mathers states that Speath arrived in the store amid the customer's harangue. In sentence 6, we learn that the third witness saw the thief assisted by the sales associate before attending to the exacting customer. This is the same customer that is described in sentence 5 as persnickety and launched a tirade just before the theft. This proves Speath's innocence since she arrived in the store during the tirade.

Anna Knox: In sentence 4, the first witness states that the thief was not a devout shopper at the store. In sentence 14, Knox states that she is a stalwart fixture in the store. This proves Anna Knox's innocence.

The Cunning Customer

Angela Payne is the Cunning Customer because a process of elimination exonerates the other suspects. Sentence 8 tells us that the police arrested one of the four suspects and one confessed. In sentence 4, the first witness states that the thief was not a devout shopper at the store. In sentences 16 and 17, Payne states she is a sporadic shopper in the store and that an obliging sales associate waited on her. In addition, in sentence 18 she attested to the moiling attention the finicky customer necessitated.

1. bustling
2. obliging
3. devout or stalwart
4. amid
5. necessitated
6. queries
7. heed
8. exacting, fastidious, or persnickety
9. inveterate
10. sporadically
11. harangue
12. abetted
13. harried
14. attest
15. transpired

Vocabulary Words and Appropriate Synonym for Context Within Case

| Vocabulary Word | Synonym |
|-----------------|---------------|
| abet | help |
| amid | among |
| attest | vouch |
| bustling | busy |
| devout | faithful |
| exacting | particular |
| fastidious | choosy |
| finicky | picky |
| harangue | rant |
| harried | strained |
| heed | regard |
| inveterate | deep-rooted |
| moiling | difficult |
| necessitate | need |
| obliging | accommodating |
| persnickety | fussy |
| query | question |
| sporadically | occasionally |
| stalwart | reliable |
| transpire | occur |