**Crime/Mystery Short Story Assignment**

This project requires you to create your own short story based around a crime or a mystery. Your story must be AT LEAST one page, but NO MORE THAN four pages. You MUST be sure to include all the parts of the story we have discussed (characters, setting, clues, red herrings, structure). You may work with a partner or you may work by yourself! Here is a checklist of all the requirements, but please refer to the rubric for how you will be assessed.

* Title page
  + Title of story
    - Should connect to something in the story
    - Is capitalized properly
  + Author’s name
* Setting
  + Where (location – country, state, city, rural, etc)
  + When (Year, time of year, season, time of day, etc)
  + Effect on story (mood)
* Characters
  + Personality
  + Motives
  + Roles (may not use all)
    - Detective
    - Witness
    - Criminal/Suspect
* Crime/Mystery
  + What’s the crime or mystery that needs to be solved?
  + Why does it need to be solved?
  + Why did it happen?
* Plot
  + Logical sequence of events
  + Make sure to check for plot holes (things that you may accidentally leave out or something you forgot to resolve)
* Clues/Red Herrings
  + Clues can be easily found
  + Red Herrings distract the reader
* Solution/Resolution
  + No loose ends to the story – everything makes sense!
* Structure
  + Beginning – introduce characters and setting; learn about the problem
  + Middle – detectives work to solve the mystery by gathering clues and interviewing suspects
  + End – Mystery is solved
  + Has dialogue
    - She said, "Please make sure to have people talk in your story!" (pay attention to characters and spacing)
    - Be sure to indent when someone new is speaking
* Publishing
  + Run spell check
  + Read paper out loud
  + Have someone else read paper
  + Proofread for grammar and punctuation

**Grading Rubric for the Crime/Mystery Short Story**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| CATEGORY | A | B | C | D/F |
| Title Page | Title page has the title, author's name in a font that is easy to read. Title clearly reflects the elements of the story. | Title page has the title, author's name in a font that is easy to read. Title is general. | Title page is missing title, author’s name, or is not easy to read. | Title page has fewer than 3 of the required elements. |
| Setting | Many vivid, descriptive words are used to tell when and where the story took place. The setting clearly impacts the mood of the story. | Some vivid, descriptive words are used to tell the audience when and where the story took place. The setting slightly impacts the mood of the story. | The reader can figure out when and where the story took place, but the author didn't supply much detail. The setting doesn’t really affect the story. | The reader has trouble figuring out when and where the story took place. The setting seems irrelevant. |
| Characters | The main characters’ personality and motives are clearly portrayed and described. The roles of the characters are evident (detective, suspect, witness). | The main characters’ personality and motives are portrayed and described. The roles of the characters are present but not explicitly described (detective, suspect, witness). | The main characters’ personality and motives are clearly portrayed and described. The roles of the characters are evident (detective, suspect, witness). | Little attention and description is given to characters. |
| Crime/Mystery | It is very easy for the reader to understand the problem (crime, mystery) the main characters face and why it is a problem. | It is fairly easy for the reader to understand the problem (crime, mystery) the main characters face and why it is a problem. | It is fairly easy for the reader to understand the problem (crime, mystery) the main characters face but it is not clear why it is a problem. | It is not clear what problem (crime, mystery) the main characters face. |
| Plot  x2 | One idea or scene follows another in a logical sequence with clear transitions. | The story is fairly well organized. One idea or scene may seem out of place. Clear transitions are used. | The story is a little hard to follow. The transitions are sometimes not clear. | Ideas and scenes seem to be randomly arranged. There is no logical flow to the story. |
| Clues/Red Herrings | Clues are easily identified. Red herrings are used effectively. | Clues are easily identified. Red herrings are not used effectively. | Clues and red herrings are both present, but one or both may be confusing. | Either clues or red herrings are missing. |
| Solution/  Resolution | The solution to the character's problem is easy to understand, and is logical. There are no loose ends. | The solution to the character's problem is easy to understand, and is somewhat logical. | The solution to the character's problem is a little hard to understand. | No solution is attempted or it is impossible to understand. |
| Structure | Story clearly has a beginning, middle and end. Story includes dialogue, which is used accurately and appropriately. Story uses the given structure of a mystery. | Story clearly has a beginning, middle and end. Story may include dialogue, but there are errors with when or how it is used. The structure is not easy for reader to follow. | It is difficult to see a distinction between beginning, middle and end. Story does not use dialogue correctly, although it is attempted. Structure does not seem apparent. | Story is missing beginning, middle or end. No dialogue in story. Structure does not seem apparent. |
| Spelling and Punctuation | There are no spelling or punctuation errors in the story. | There are only minor errors in the story. | Quite a few errors - some might hinder understanding. | Significant errors that interfere with understanding. |

**Mystery Short Story**

Your assignment is to write a mystery short story. This is to be typed, double spaced, 12 point font (Times New Roman or Arial). Write in paragraph form and make sure to correct all errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, dialogue, and form. Be sure to include all the elements of a short story as discussed and included below. Refer to <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/> (or another style manual) to check for any errors in writing. You will also be reading, editing, and proofreading the stories of your classmates. If you have any questions or need any help, please also be sure to ask me! I’m looking forward to reading your stories! ☺

**Writing a Mystery Story**

(adapted from http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/mystery/)

**Writing Tips**

There are a lot of elements to writing a mystery. These tips should help you brainstorm! Included are all the steps you'll need to create a story full of surprise and suspense. Read through them, and start making notes for your mystery.

1. **Every story begins with an idea.** Keep your eyes, ears, and mind open to ideas. Ask yourself what if? Try looking for ideas as you read the newspaper. Did burglars hit three houses on one street in the middle of the day? How did they know no one would be home? What were the burglars looking for? What if you decided to be a detective and solved the crime? Use the newspaper story as a springboard and jump into your own idea.
2. **Your main character is the most important part of your story.** The main character will determine in which direction the plot will grow. Is your main character a new girl at school who covers up her insecurity by bragging a lot? How will her personality affect the way the story is solved? Step inside your character's mind. Then ask yourself, "Now what will I do?"
3. **Choose minor characters who will be in your story.** Does your main character have a best friend who will help her sort out the clues? Best friends are good to include, because the main character needs someone to talk to. Are there people who don't want the main character to solve the mystery? Who are they?
4. **The plot of any story is this: The main character has a problem, and must solve it by him or herself.** In a mystery story, the problem has to do with the solution of the mystery. What is the mystery idea you've chosen? Is it a crime? Is it something scary? What should the main character discover? And what — or who — is going to get in the way, so the solution to the mystery won't be too easy?
5. **Make a list of clues that you can use in your story.** One should be the crucial clue. This crucial clue is one piece of important information that helps the main character finally solve the mystery. The crucial clue might be something that points directly to the perpetrator of the crime. For example, maybe one character — Sam — says that he received a strange telephone call at eight o'clock. Later in the story, the main character receives information about where all the suspects were at eight o'clock, remembers what Sam had said about receiving a call at that time, and knows that it couldn't possibly have happened. Your detective then realizes that Sam is the perpetrator.
6. **Think about "red herrings."** Red herrings are bits of information that are designed to mislead readers by making them suspect the wrong characters. Red herrings are fun to include because they make mysteries harder to solve. Maybe you want readers to suspect the main character's little brother, who has a real fondness for peanut butter and grape jelly sandwiches. Suppose your main character finds smeared jelly fingerprints in a suspicious place. Readers will immediately think of the little brother's sandwiches — especially if your main character is disturbed by the jelly stains — and they won't notice if you slip in a real clue.
7. **Suspense is an important ingredient in a mystery story.** Footsteps coming up the stairs in the dark, a doorknob silently turning, a suspect arriving when he's not expected, an unanswered question about one of the characters — there are many ways to make your stories suspenseful. Allow your characters to be scared. Your readers will identify with him or her, and they'll be scared, too.
8. **The setting should fit the mood of the story.** Think about where you want your story to take place. Should it be at night? On a foggy morning? During a thunderstorm? Maybe the day is sunny and bright, but the character has to explore the dark passages of a deserted building. What was that noise? Rats? Footsteps? Describe the dark passages. Let readers see the building. Write so vividly that readers feel they are there with your character.
9. **Look for the best place in which to begin your story.** Mystery stories should begin with action, with suspense, with something interesting or exciting happening. Readers should meet the main characters and be introduced to the mystery right at the beginning.
10. **Know how your story will end before you begin to write it.** It's easy to begin writing and surprise yourself on every page, then discover that in the middle of your story you've written yourself into a box. Think over various solutions to your character's problem, remembering that she has to solve the mystery herself. She's in charge. It's her story.

As you think over ideas, you're going to discard some of them because you'll see they won't work. When the right solution comes along, you'll know it, and you'll be able to begin your story. It's all right for the middle of your story to remain flexible. You might think of something funny or exciting or interesting for your main character to do that you hadn't expected when you began writing. ***It's the ending that must stay in place.*** You won't lose your story and have to begin again with another idea if you know where your main character is going.

**Crime/Mystery Starting Points!**

***Story Starters***

1. It was a strange night, there seemed to be a chill in the air...
2. As soon as I arrived, I could sense that something was out of place...
3. One night, as I looked out the window, I saw the neighbor...
4. I was watching TV when I looked up. There in the window I saw...
5. I decided to go for an evening stroll.  I walked about three blocks when I felt it...
6. They would have been fine if they hadn't stopped for the stranger...
7. Everyone avoided the big old mansion. It was believed to have...
8. They said she was able to utter a few words before she died...
9. Something is drastically wrong! Every time I pick up the telephone...
10. Sometimes I think my friend has strange powers. Every time he's around...
11. All of a sudden I was trapped!
12. “DID YOU HEAR THAT?” I screamed…
13. As I walked through the door, all I could focus on was the blood that covered the floor…
14. Never in a million years did I think that someone would steal my…
15. She thought he was out of her life forever, until…

***Possible Character Relationships/Occupations Possible Crimes/Mysteries:***

1. Co-workers 1. Murder
2. Siblings 2. Theft/Robbery
3. Friends 3. Kidnapping
4. (Creepy) Extended Family 4. Escape
5. Enemies 5. Blackmail
6. Lovers 6. Greed
7. Strangers 7. Revenge
8. Law Enforcement 8. Competition
9. Lawyers 9. Affair
10. Monsters 10. Joke gone bad

***Possible Settings***

1. Haunted House
2. Graveyard
3. Police station
4. Rural location
5. High School
6. Busy city
7. Suburban neighborhood
8. Train/bus/subway
9. Ship/boat/canoe/kayak
10. Woods/Forest

**Writing Mysteries Brainstorm/Plan**

Name of Mystery: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the mystery to solve?
2. Who are the main characters in the mystery?
3. Describe each character briefly and his/her participation in the mystery.
4. What are the key clues?
5. What is/are the red herrings?
6. What is the solution to the mystery?
7. What was the main clue needed to solve the mystery?
8. What is the setting(s)? How does the setting impact the story? How does the setting affect the mood of the story?
9. Look at the structure of the story.
   1. What info is in the beginning of the story?
   2. Where is the middle of the story? What info is included there?
   3. Where is the end of the story? Does it have any loose ends? Is the crime or mystery solved?