

# THE DEADLY PICNIC

## An Exercise in Deductive Reasoning

### Objective

You will use deductive reasoning to decide who committed the murder.

### Background Information

Centerville police discovered the body of a 36-year-old white male (later identified as Gaven Brooks) in an open field of daisies about five miles outside of town. Mr. Brooks's body was discovered at 10:02 pm Friday night, October 11. He was found lying face up on a yellow, queen-size sheet. According to autopsy reports, one fatal gunshot to the back of the head ended Mr. Brooks's life. Scientists estimate that death occurred at about 7:45 pm.

As investigators scanned the crime scene, they made the following notes:

- Paper plates filled with partially eaten fried chicken, potato salad, and chocolate cake were located near Mr. Brooks's body.
- An open bottle of red wine and two partially-filled glasses of wine were found next to the yellow sheet.
- One of the wine glasses had a smudge of red lipstick on the rim.
- A recently smoked cigarette butt was found near the sheet.
- Footprints from the road to the field were those of a male, size 10, and a female, size 5. The only footprints from the field back to the road were those of a female, size 5.
- Car tracks of the same wheel base and tread pattern as Mr. Brooks's automobile were found at the road. The car was not found at the scene.
- Later that evening Mr. Brooks's car was found abandoned in an empty parking lot in downtown Centerville.

Investigators believe that a female friend of Mr. Brooks was responsible for his demise. After questioning family and friends, it was discovered that the deceased had frequent social outings with six women who live in or near Centerville. The women's names are Rita, Lauren, Gail, Janice, Elaine, and Peggy.

In today's activity you will answer these questions:

1. Who was responsible for the murder?
2. What events surrounded this murder?

## Procedure

1. After reading the Background Information, record some important pieces of information in Data Table 1.
2. Read the special notes (given below) that the police gathered during their investigation. Record this information in Data Table 2.
3. Answer the Post-Activity Questions.

### *Special notes gathered by police investigation:*

- Janice works full time as a cosmetologist.
- Elaine and Gail are school teachers.
- Peggy and Elaine live together in a two-bedroom apartment in downtown Centerville.
- Gail lives in a nearby town called Jordan.
- Rita lives in a country house about three miles to the west of Centerville.
- Elaine and Janice are very petite women-they wear size 4 blue jeans.
- Gail and Janice are nonsmokers.
- Janice works part time as an aerobics instructor at a health club in Centerville. She teaches a 7:30 pm step aerobics class each Friday night and has not missed a class in two years.
- Peggy is deathly allergic to grapes.
- Peggy doesn't wear lipstick.
- Gail attends the aerobics class that Janice teaches. She has not missed a Friday night class in nine months.
- Lauren works at a chemical supply house.
- Rita's father owns a rifle range.
- Lauren is allergic to all species of flowering plants.
- Rita is a florist.
- Rita doesn't wear lipstick.
- Janice and Elaine have never met.
- Janice and Gail hate the color yellow.
- Lauren played center for a semi-professional basketball team five years ago. She has red hair and is 6-feet, 1-inch tall.

DATA TABLE 1

| <i>QUESTION</i>  | <i>ANSWER</i> |
|--|---------------|
| Description of location where body was found   |               |
| Approximate time and day of death  |               |
| Weapon used to inflict fatal wound   |               |
| Description of any footprints, tire prints, lip prints, etc., around the crime scene |               |
| Description of objects found at or around the crime scene                            |               |
| Any other pieces of evidence that may help solve this crime                          |               |

DATA TABLE 2

|        | <i>Comments on women's physicality</i> | <i>Occupation and hobbies</i> | <i>City or place she lives</i> | <i>Medical information</i> | <i>Miscellaneous information</i> |
|--------|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Rita   |  |                               |                                |                            |                                  |
| Lauren |  |                               |                                |                            |                                  |
| Gail   |  |                               |                                |                            |                                  |
| Janice |  |                               |                                |                            |                                  |
| Peggy  |  |                               |                                |                            |                                  |
| Elaine |  |                               |                                |                            |                                  |

## Post-Activity Questions

1. Who do you think killed Mr. Brooks?

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2. Cite key pieces of information that caused you to believe the other five women were innocent.

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3. What information helped you identify the murderer?

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4. Write a two-paragraph account that describes what you believe happened on the night of the murder. Explain how the couple got to the murder site, why they went there, what happened while they were there, and how the murderer escaped. What do you believe was her motive? **Be sure to keep this school appropriate!**

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