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Opening extract from

How to be a Detective

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A detective is on a quest to find the truth and must collect as much information as possible. Some of the most crucial evidence comes from eyewitnesses: the people who saw a crime take place. But be careful – they can get things wrong and people always see the same thing slightly differently.



QUESTIONING WITNESSES



Interviews need to be held in a quiet undisturbed place where the witness will feel comfortable. Some witnesses may not be reliable and their account will need checking or testing. If a witness describes a suspect as particularly tall, the detective needs to check how good they are at judging height.

False witnesses are people who claim to have seen a crime because they want to be part of the action when they were nowhere near the scene at all!

Here are some questions a good detective will ask a witness:

What did you see and hear?
What time was it?
What did the suspect look like?
How tall were they?
Was there anything unusual about the suspect?
What were they wearing?
Which way did they go after the crime?
Did you see anyone helping them or anyone else who saw what happened?

INTERVIEWING SUSPECTS

once. A detective must pay attention to the details – a suspect may make a mistake and change their account.

3. Patience If a suspect is relaxed they are more likely to open up and possibly let something slip. The more they talk, the easier it will be to find a flaw in their alibi.

4. Trust Many suspects will lie convincingly. A good detective must be wary and trust their instinct, even if a story sounds like it is true.



Crooks are often good liars and what they say to avoid being caught can be very convincing. However, their body language can give away the real story. Here's what a detective will look for:



Face touching
Rubbing, scratching, stroking their face, or putting their hands on their mouth are signs of anxiety. The suspect could be hiding something.



Sweating
Beads of sweat on someone's forehead or sweaty palms are another sign that someone is uncomfortable and could be lying. That, or the room is too hot.



Twitchy hands
Fidgety, restless hands can mean someone is lying, while hands that are open and remain still can be a sign that someone is telling the truth.

Crossed arms
These are a clear sign that someone is being defensive and feels threatened.



Eye contact
When a suspect avoids eye contact, it could mean that they are uncomfortable or embarrassed. Maybe they aren't telling the truth? However, too much eye contact – if someone stares all the time – can mean they are trying too hard to appear truthful.



From the Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes

You must be able to put a humble witness at ease. The main thing is to never let them think that the information they have is of the slightest importance to you. If you do, they will shut up instantly like an oyster. If you listen to them as if you don't really care, you are very likely to get what you want.

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As far back as Ancient Rome, detectives have used handwriting as evidence to catch criminals because, just like fingerprints, everybody's writing is different. Of course, more people use computers now, but even typed documents can contain enough clues for a detective to follow.



It's almost impossible to forge someone else's writing because the way we write is unique to us. It depends on so many things: the type of pen or pencil, the paper, how quickly the writing was done and even what mood you were in. So the next time your teacher says your handwriting is messy you can tell them it isn't your fault, it's the pencil's, and the paper's, and you're tired, and sad... On second thoughts, maybe not.



In the Zone

Draw four lines over a piece of handwriting to divide it into "zones". The top line should be at the height of the tallest letter, the second and third lines should enclose most of the letters, while the bottom line should be at the tail of the lowest letter. You can then look at the zones and compare them. How low do they go, how high, are the smaller letters squished, fat, or po



HIDDEN HANDWRITING

1. Pile the paper up and write a message on the top sheet.
2. Take the top sheet away from the pile and hold the page below up to the light. Can you see anything?
3. Lay this second page on a flat surface. Take the pencil and shade lightly (using the side of the lead) over the place where you wrote your message. It should reveal whatever you wrote.
4. Try writing a hidden message using this technique and give it to a friend to reveal.

Finding hidden writing is a great way of discovering clues and extra evidence when you are tracking down a crook. If a page has been ripped out of a book or diary, you can still find out what was written there.

Your style of writing can tell people a lot about the type of person you are.

Lots of space between words means you like having your own personal space and being on your own.



If it's crammed together it could mean you like being around lots of people.

If your writing is straight and it doesn't slant then it could mean you like being in control and are very sensible.

If it slants this way it could mean you are friendly.

If it goes this way then it could mean you are quite quiet and don't like expressing yourself.





If your writing is big like this it might mean your mind moves fast and you have trouble focusing on one thing.

If it's really small you may like to do one thing at a time and prefer to do it on your own.



If you don't write on lined paper and your writing goes up like this, then that might mean you are positive and enthusiastic.

But if it goes the other way, that could mean you are moody or grumpy.



If your handwriting is full of loops and curls it could mean you are a bit of a show-off.

If it is very plain and simple then that probably means you're a bit shy.

From the Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes

I can look at a piece of writing and instantly picture the person who wrote it: the look on their face, the cut of their jib, the shape of their hand, and the state of their mind. There is a world of meaning hidden in the smallest letter.

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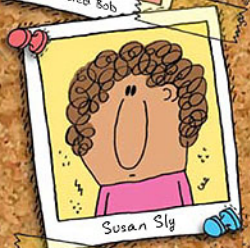
Every crook has a different way of working, known as the *modus operandi* or MO for short. A detective needs to know as many MOs as possible so that he can recognize a crook from the evidence left at a crime scene. For example, if a crook likes to raid the fridge of every house he burgles, he may leave prints on the fridge. If another sucks sweets at the scene, there may be telltale sweetie wrappers. Studying how crooks work and how they think will make them easier to catch and may even suggest a way of trapping them. This is called criminal profiling.









It is believed that Pat the Hands lives on his own. One former associate said Pat liked to steal cakes because when he was young no one ever celebrated his birthday with him. He has also never stolen carrot cake. Why? Because he doesn't like carrots. Or any other vegetables for that matter. This lack of vitamins has left him with bad skin. So Pat the Hands is a fat man with enormous hands, terrible teeth and awful skin. He shouldn't be too difficult to find.

It is my belief that we should lay a trap for Pat, by baking a enormous chocolate cake and displaying it in the window of a cake shop. When Pat sees the cake, he won't be able to resist stealing it, so we can lie in wait at night (his carrot-free diet means his night vision will be poor) and catch him in the act.

Joe Bloggs

Detective Inspector Joe Bloggs

Investigate!

Practice your profiling skills by creating profile cards for your friends and family. This is the sort of information you will need to find out:

1. Personal information – nicknames, job, habits, hobbies. Do they have any fears or phobias?

2. Physical information – is there anything strange or unique about the way they look or dress, the way they talk or gestures they make?



3. Special skills – languages they speak, artistic talents, or any athletic feats, such as being able to run fast.

4. What sort of person are they? Here are some questions to consider:



Do they have a temper and get upset easily, or do they remain calm?

Are they the sort of person who is good at lying or someone who only tells the truth?

Do they plan things carefully, or just do them without thinking?

Are they outgoing and talk a lot, or are they quiet and keep themselves to themselves?

Imagine the person you are profiling in certain situations and try to imagine how they would act. For instance, if they found a £10 note while walking down the street would they try and find out who it belonged to or slip it quietly into their pocket? Or if an old lady asked them to help her across the road do they do it without any complaint or say, "Get stuffed, Grandma!" and walk away?





Creating a card for each person that you come in contact with as a detective will help you organize your information. Include fingerprint records, photographs, statements and criminal profiles as you gather the information. Use cards of different colours to compile a detective database including witnesses, informants and suspects.

From the Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes

All knowledge is useful to a detective. The best thing anyone can do is shut themselves away and read for twelve hours a day about crime and criminals. The same crimes occur again and again with the same methods, and the detective who has done his reading and truly knows the mind of a criminal will be the one who has the most success.

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