



Key Words

be up to
blueprints
bolt
clue
evidence
fingerprints
hunch
mastermind
ransom
theft
unreliable
witness

Citing Textual Evidence


A text contains textual evidence, or information, such as words, phrases and illustrations. A reader refers to (cites) this information by quoting or paraphrasing from the text. Citing textual evidence provides support to the reader's analysis of the text.

To Find a Thief

by Patricia Hamill

Mysteries are all around us. Some, like guessing games or riddles, are fun to solve. Other mysteries, like the ones involving robberies, are much more serious. Police detectives and private investigators work quickly to solve crimes and catch the criminals.

1 Work in a small group. Talk about a true crime.

2 Listen and follow. 

Planning a Robbery

Some of the most famous crimes involve the **theft** of great works of art or expensive jewelry. Thieves may not actually want these objects, but both famous artwork and jewelry can be sold for a lot of money. The problem for thieves is figuring out how to steal precious art and jewels and then how to sell them.

So, how do thieves do it? Like the police, they have to do research and investigate. For instance, they have to learn everything about the place where the jewelry or art is. Is it in a house? Is it in a museum? Is it in a bank vault? Nowadays, many places have video cameras. Doors and windows are also frequently locked with heavy **bolts** and have sensors and alarms. If it is a museum or bank, security guards could be on duty at all times. They might need the **blueprints** to see if there are other ways to get into and out of a building.

Once they have stolen the objects, thieves have to think about the next step. How can they hide themselves and the stolen property after they commit the crime? Who will buy the stolen property? They have to plan it all. But regardless of how well they plan the theft and how many people help, things can always go wrong!

Collecting Evidence

Not all crimes are easy to solve. The police might find the stolen objects, but that does not mean they will find the thieves. They need **evidence** like **fingerprints** or **witnesses** to help them solve the crime.

Fingerprints are **clues** that could lead to catching the criminal. Police have to be careful, though. The fingerprints could also belong to an innocent person. There may also be witnesses to the crime, but witnesses can sometimes be **unreliable**. A witness could be afraid to name the criminal, or they could lie to protect the criminal. It is **up to** the police to collect all the clues and evidence, find the criminal and prove that he or she committed the crime.



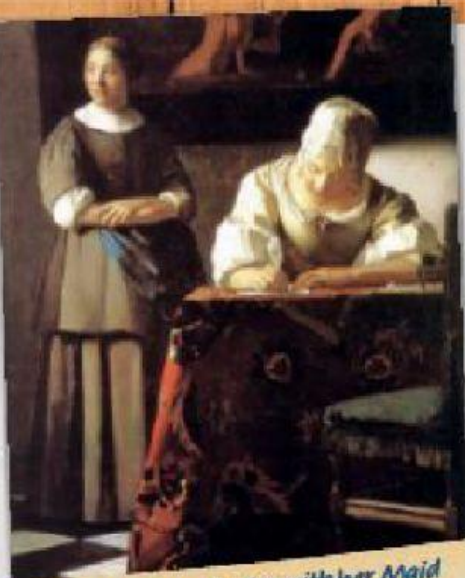
Blueprints



A fingerprint

How Do the Police Figure It All Out?

Detectives need to think about every possibility. They cannot miss any clues in the crime area. The thieves might have accidentally dropped something—like a candy wrapper. These small details are also clues, and an observant detective will decide if it is a clue. Each clue is like a piece to the puzzle. But how do the police put all of the pieces of the puzzle together? Sometimes they cannot, and that is how a crime stays a mystery. In other cases, it takes very determined detectives years of investigation to solve a crime.

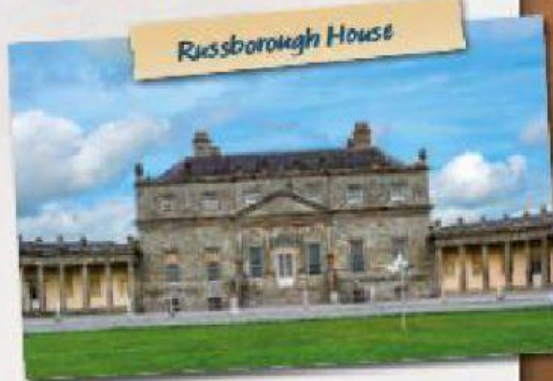


Lady Writing a Letter with her Maid

The Painting

One such crime was the theft of a famous painting, *Lady Writing a Letter with her Maid*, by the renowned Dutch artist, Johannes Vermeer. Many of his paintings are in museums around the world, but this particular painting was in a private collection at Russborough House in Ireland. The owner was careful about security because this painting had actually been stolen once before! The second time it was stolen, the police thought the thieves were the same people. However, they were wrong. It was another group of criminals with a very different plan.

In May 1986, thieves intentionally set off an alarm. But instead of running away, they hid in the bushes. The security guard could not find any evidence of an attempted robbery, so he decided it was a false alarm. He also decided there had to be something wrong with the alarm system. That's why, when the police arrived, he sent them away. Later, at about two in the morning, the thieves left their hiding spot, broke into the mansion and stole eighteen paintings! The security guard's mistake actually helped the thieves because he thought it was another false alarm when it went off again.



Russborough House

The Suspect

Even after the robbery, the owner was confident the police would solve the crime. They had a suspect—the well-known criminal named Martin Cahill. His nickname was “The General” because he was as bold and fearless as a military leader. The problem was they could not prove he had committed the crime! Very few people could identify him—he normally wore a mask when he went out. And no one would talk to the police. They were all afraid. The rumor was that Cahill was holding the Vermeer painting for a **ransom** of 20 million pounds. But the money was never paid and Cahill was never seen with the painting. Some of the other paintings were found in a hole near the mansion and other places. However, the Vermeer was not found until sixteen years later, in Antwerp, Belgium!

The Detective

A detective named Charley Hill had been investigating the robbery. His research led him to the people who might have the painting. Then he posed as an art buyer and said he wanted to buy the painting. It worked, and they agreed to meet him. The Vermeer painting was wrapped in big plastic bags in the trunk of a car. Detective Hill recovered the painting and the people trying to sell it were arrested. Yet no one could prove Martin Cahill was part of this group of thieves. Cahill might have **masterminded** the plot, but he never went to jail for it. The painting is now in a museum, but the thieves who originally stole the painting were never caught.



Cahill's disguise: a hoodie and mask



Antwerp, Belgium



The Jewelry

Jewels are smaller than paintings, so you might think they are easier to steal. Perhaps they are, but finding someone to buy stolen jewels is as difficult as finding a buyer for stolen paintings. The owner of stolen jewels cannot wear them in public or even talk about them. Police also alert all jewel dealers about stolen gems. Even so, some thieves will do whatever it takes to get the jewels they want.

In December 2008, three women walked into a famous jewelry store on the Avenue Montaigne in Paris. The store, named after its owner, Harry Winston, had some of the most famous and expensive diamonds in the world. The women were dressed in expensive clothing.

However, they weren't women. They were men disguised as women! No one outside noticed them leave the store. They looked like any other customers, and they were gone before the police arrived. The total value of the jewelry taken was worth about \$108 million dollars!



The Investigation

When police detectives began their investigation, the clues were contradictory. Some witnesses in the store said the men were French. Others said they spoke French with a Yugoslavian accent, so maybe they were not French after all. However, their possible accent and bold behavior was the only information the police had. It was enough. Police had a **hunch** the robbery was the work of a group of criminals known as “The Pink Panthers.” These criminals had stolen diamonds and other jewels before. Now the police had to work very quickly, but they did not work quickly enough. It was three years before the police found some of the jewels from the robbery dumped on the side of a road. That led police to believe the thieves were in the area. Then they found some witnesses. Later on, the police remembered that a purse had been left behind at the store. And that purse had some evidence—DNA! With this new information and evidence, eight people were eventually arrested and sent to prison for the robbery.



Are You a Good Detective?

Are you observant? Do you like to investigate and do research? It might be to figure out how a crime was committed and how the criminals escaped. The more professional the thieves, the better they are at escaping or avoiding jail time. It might be about how to catch the thieves and recover the stolen items. With clues like DNA and witnesses, some crimes can be solved easily. In other cases, the police might know who committed the crime but not have the evidence to prove it. It takes a lot of research and good observation skills if someone wants to solve a crime.

Comprehension

1 Read the sentences. Which robbery do they refer to? Write *P* (paintings) or *J* (jewelry).

1 The thieves hid in the bushes.

☐

4 The thieves were never caught.

☐

2 The thieves were disguised as women.

☐

5 The thieves were arrested.

☐

3 Some of stolen property was found next to a road.

☐

6 Some of the stolen property was found in a hole.

☐

2 Complete the sentences with the correct words.

blueprints is up to ransom robbery unreliable witness

1 There was a at our neighbor's house last night.

2 The was; he couldn't describe the thief.

3 Architects use when building a house.

4 The thieves asked for a million dollars in

5 It investigators to collect all the clues and decide what is important.

3 Number the sentences in the correct order.

☐

The thieves must have hidden some of the paintings in a hole near the mansion.

☐

The owner must have called the police when he found the paintings had been stolen.

☐

The security guard must have felt bad after the paintings were stolen.

☐

The thieves might have chosen their hiding spot using blueprints.

☐

The detective must have been very happy when he recovered the Vermeer painting.

☐

The thieves might have spent months planning the robbery.

4 Citing Textual Evidence Cite the text that supports each statement.

1 Police cannot always believe what a witness says.

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2 Detectives must evaluate every clue at a crime scene.

.....

3 Not every crime is solved.

.....

4 You must be patient to be a good detective.

.....

5 Creating Anticipation Mark (✓) the sentences that create anticipation.

- 1 But regardless of how well they plan the theft and how many people help, things can always go wrong! ☐
- 2 The second time it was stolen, the police thought the thieves were the same people. However, they were wrong. It was another group of criminals with a very different plan. ☐
- 3 The security guard could not find any evidence of an attempted robbery, so he decided it was a false alarm. He also decided there had to be something wrong with the alarm system. ☐
- 4 Even so, some thieves will do whatever it takes to get the jewels they want. ☐
- 5 Then they found some witnesses. Later on, the police remembered that a purse had been left behind at the store. And that purse had some evidence—DNA! ☐
- 6 The total value of the jewelry taken was worth about \$108 million dollars! ☐

Creating Anticipation

An author creates anticipation by slowly providing some—but not all—the details of a story or text. Readers then begin to guess or predict what is going to happen next. If an author writes about a young boy opening the front door of an old, abandoned house, readers will begin to guess what might happen to next in the story.

6 Creating Anticipation Read the sentences. Continue the stories to create anticipation.

- 1 The detective looked at the crime scene.

- 2 The security guard walked through the empty museum.
