

Mary Amato's How to Write a Mystery

NOTE FOR TEACHERS: This activity can be done individually, or you can work on one collaborative story.



Writing a mystery is exciting—and challenging. Keep the plot simple and focus on character development. Read the outline and fill in the graphic organizer. After you have completed the graphic organizer, really imagine the story happening in your mind. Concentrate on who the characters are and what they want. When you're ready, write the story as clearly as you can.

Outline

Scene 1: The villain steals X. (X can be anything you want...jewels? A gold statue? A teacher's coffee cup?)

Scene 2: The sleuth discovers that X has been stolen.

Scene 3: The sleuth sets a trap for another theft.

Scene 4: The villain tries to commit this theft, and the sleuth catches the villain in the act.

Graphic Organizer

Who is your villain? (Write the name and character traits.)

What does your villain steal? (Describe the object. Write about why your villain wants this.)

Who is your sleuth? (Write the name and character traits.)

What is the trap your sleuth sets?

Final Tips

- If you get stuck writing, close your eyes and picture the story as if it is a movie playing in your mind. Then, open your eyes and write down what happened.
- Act out the story with friends or classmates. This can really get you inspired to write. This can also help to work out plot or character problems before you sit down to write.
- After you're done with a first draft, share your writing with peers. Ask them to tell you if the story makes sense.