

Teen Mystery Programs

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Mystery events can come in a variety of formats including a play put on by staff, or a hired group for patrons to watch and observe, a scavenger hunt for younger patrons, or a role-playing exercise for activity participants, to name a few. A mystery or crime can appeal to all ages if strategically and appropriately planned. Below are two examples of event plans that can appeal to a younger and older set of young adults in the library.

Objectives and Rationale

This program will bring a group of teens together for a fun, social afternoon or evening. It is a reasonably low-budget program that is highly engaging and takes very little planning, other than preparing the game itself. Once the program is running, the librarian facilitating the program can choose to either participate in the game or sit out and just facilitate the fun!

A program like this involves teamwork, bonding, and role-playing. This requires a lot of creativity. A murder mystery game will support the following developmental assets of teens (from Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents):

- Creative activities – supports the teen's need for creativity

- Planning and decision making – supports the need to learn to plan ahead and make choices
- Interpersonal competence – supports the need to make friends and interact with others

Working together will help the participants learn to work in a team. Depending on who attends the program, teens may also get to make new friends.

Another main objective for this event is to provide a fun and engaging way for teens to discover the many spaces in the library. It also provides an entertaining and safe way for teens to get excited about Halloween, as well as a way to continue offering a fun service in autumn after the Summer Reading Program had concluded last season. From the nature of the activities, it allows for participants to develop analytical and critical thinking skills as they follow the clues and their observations. Furthermore, it effectively blends aspects of logic and reasoning with creativity that participants can explore in themselves.

Description (Younger Teen Program)

This is a special one-time only program for teen intrigue at the library. Each participant will act as detective and will need to follow clues around the library to solve the mystery. There are three things they will have to find out: who is the guilty person,

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where the crime happened and with what object (similar to the board game Clue).

For the program, there will be several library volunteers appointed to scenes relating to the crime throughout the library. The volunteers will be dressed up as characters who are potentially suspects. Participants will be able to find the dressed up volunteers and ask them questions to receive clues in order to solve the mystery. Throughout the event, a base station will be located in the teen section where snacks and refreshments will be served, allowing the young teens to socialize and/or take breaks from investigating, as well as asking for help from the coordinating librarian if they truly become stuck on something in the mystery.



(Grynoch, 2015)

Description (Older Teen Program)

Murder mystery parties are popular with children, teens, and adults. They are easy to run as usually they can be purchased as a kit that just needs to either be printed off the internet or organized out of the box. Most of these kits specify how many participants are needed to run the game successfully, but have several extra roles so that everyone will have a character. Usually, the instructions will suggest that the participants are told about their character in advance so they can come in costume. With a teen library program, this may not be feasible. One suggestion would be to have a few cheap props ready to allow teens to take on their roles once it is assigned.

Each one of these types of games has a unique plot, but the basic concept is the same. Each participant is given a character that they will act as for the duration of the party. The game itself is played in rounds. During the first round, everyone is given envelopes with some directions for how their character should act and their possible involvement in the murder. Participants then interact, playing their characters and trying to get a feel for what the other people are up to. During the second round, the victim is identified. They can still participate in the game, but they are now a ghost, and are not allowed to answer any of the other character's questions. In the third round,

everyone comes back together and each person makes his or her guess as to who is guilty of the murder. Then, each character identifies what their actual involvement is, and prizes can be given to anyone who guessed correctly.

There are endless variations to this basic layout. Murder mystery games can be found online, some free and some for a price. A few resources are listed below.

- Murder Mystery Parties for Teens (<http://www.mymysteryparty.com/domypate1.html>) This website has well over 50 different games that can be bought then immediately downloaded and printed. Prices range from \$40 - \$60. Short descriptions are given of the theme of each game and how many players are needed.
- Free Murder Mystery Dinner Scripts (<http://www.party411.com/Partygames/MurderMysteryDinner.aspx>) This site has links to over ten free murder mystery games that can be found online. Each one has some information and basic instructions.
- Night of Mystery (<https://www.nightofmystery.com/shop/>) A wide range of different murder mystery themes can be found on this website. The games can be downloaded, and can be customized

depending on how many guests are attending. Prices range from \$40 -\$80.

Target Audience

The target audience for the event for younger teens is ages 12-14. This activity is aimed towards the younger end in order to have the appropriate degree of difficulty with the mystery crime plot and the clues provided by the volunteers.

Murder mystery games can be customized to be appropriate for any age group, but since murder is a fairly mature theme the target audience for the older teen version of the program would be ages 14 and up.

Scheduling

These events will take place on two different Friday evenings in October. Those who want to be a participant will need to sign up at least one week in advance to get a rough idea of how many participants we can expect.

We will have this begin around closing time (will vary based upon individual library's hours) and allow 3 hours for the duration of the event. This is ample time because the activity is predicted to take a large portion of the time, but also gives some time afterwards for the teens to socialize with one another and eat the snacks. It is also early enough so that there is enough time for cleanup.

Use of Accompanying Library Resources

No library resources are directly required for this program except for program space. As it is taking place on a Friday evening, we expect that interruption to regular service would be minimal because of the timing of the program. Depending on the theme of the game selected, it might be interesting to have a selection of books laid out for participants to look at and borrow after the program. For example, a murder mystery with a Western theme could have some teen novels with a similar setting, then a selection of non-fiction books that participants could look at to get an idea of the setting and help get them in character.

Staff

By using a registration sign up, we can get an accurate idea of how many teens to expect, and from there we can adjust our number of staff. We will have one librarian or senior librarian assistant (either of whom have had an integral part of the planning process) to run the program with help from library volunteers and/or assistants working at that time.

Equipment

- Paper and envelopes
- Pens
- A murder mystery game kit
- Props such as glasses, funny face pieces, hats (optional)
- Snacks (optional)

Who's Watching You?

Budget

- Game: \$30-\$80 (or possibly free, depending on choice of game)
- Snacks: \$20-\$30 (optional, but suggested!)
- Props: \$30 (optional)
- Total: free-\$140

Publicity

Similar to any of our other speciality programmed events for teens, we will promote this even through social media (Facebook, Twitter, website). We will also promote in person by having flyers to hand out in advance of the event at service and circulation points throughout the library to further promote it to our patrons.

Evaluation

The program will be evaluated by asking teens to complete a very short feedback form at the end. Staff will also pay attention to whether teens are talking about the program afterwards, and ask for their verbal feedback in the weeks to follow. Attendance will also be evaluated to decide whether it is feasible to offer this program again.

Community Engagement

As there are prizes that will be handed out, we could potentially have a relationship with a local business who could provide the prizes if interested.