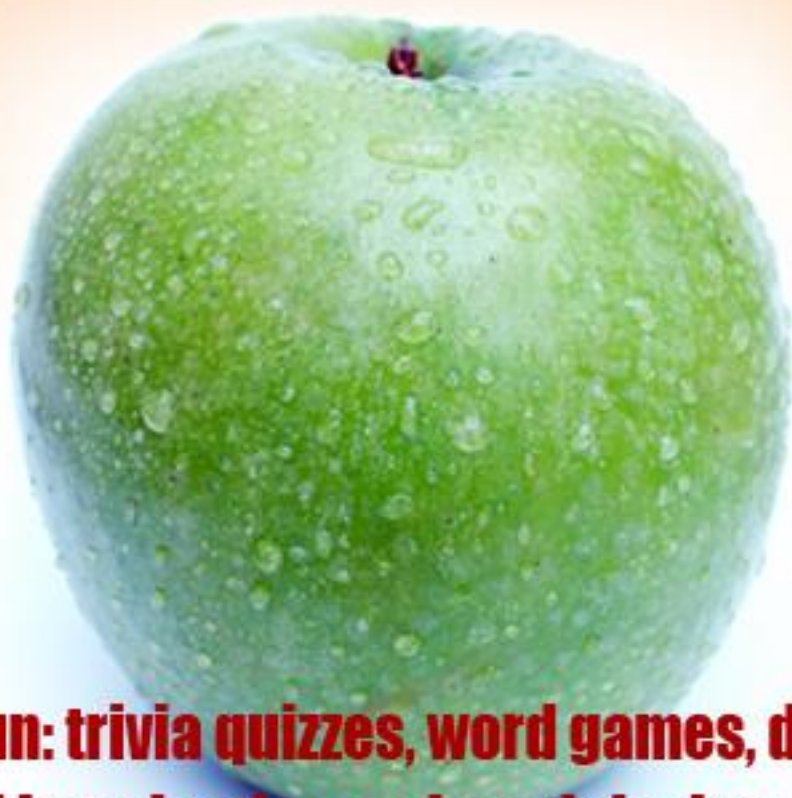


MindPlay Connections™

MYSTERIOUS FUN



Brain teaser fun: trivia quizzes, word games, discussion questions, and imagination and reminiscing exercises



Welcome to Wiser Now's MindPlay Connections™

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If you have exercises, resources, or ideas you want to add, please feel free to email

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

"Mysterious Fun" is the theme of this **MindPlay Connections™**, focused more on fun than fright. But if it doesn't send chills up your spine, it'll light up your mind.

This issue is one of an ever expanding list of dozens that can be accessed at <http://shop.wisernow.com>. It makes a great accompaniment to other titles in the Lighthearted Fun Volume, such as:

- Movie Nostalgia
- Nostalgia TV
- Nifty 1950s

The goal of MindPlay Connections™ is always twofold:

1) We want you to make playful new connections in your brain, because learning new information builds new brain pathways – as opposed to retrieving answers you already know, which merely deepens ruts.

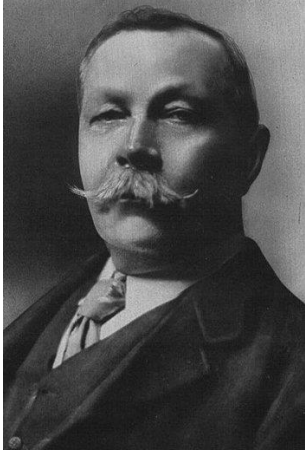
2) We want you to strengthen your connections with others by sharing the exercises with a partner or group, because having strong social networks is one of the most important components of wellbeing at any age.

Feel free to go beyond the suggested uses. For example, many of the exercises are likely to prompt reminiscences that can open up additional discussions.

Discussion: 3 Mystery Writers

Three famous mystery writers were born near the end of May:

- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born May 22, 1859
- Dashiell Hammett was born May 27, 1894
- Ian Fleming was born May 28, 1908



Each has an interesting biography, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (hereafter called Sir Arthur for simplicity's sake) is the most complex and fascinating of them. He began his career as a physician, but by his own admission had few patients, and initially used the time waiting for the ill to arrive at his doorstep by writing a wide range of science fiction, romance and historical novels, along with poetry, plays, pamphlets, and other non-fiction works. The Scottish author is most famous for creating the characters of "consulting detective" Sherlock Holmes and his sidekick Dr. John Watson, who serves as the narrator for most of the dozens of mystery stories in which they are featured. The character of Sherlock Holmes is especially noted for his intellectual prowess, and uncommon powers of observation, deductive reasoning and inference

that enable him to solve difficult cases. He famously wrote, "You see, but you do not observe."

That makes his late life interest in spiritualism and fairies (he was famously taken in by a hoax related to photographs of fairies) particularly surprising. He was a friend for a while to Harry Houdini, but they had a falling out apparently based on Mr. Houdini's attempts to expose the trickery of spiritual mediums and Sir Arthur's refusal to believe that Mr. Houdini was a magician, rather than someone who possessed supernatural powers.

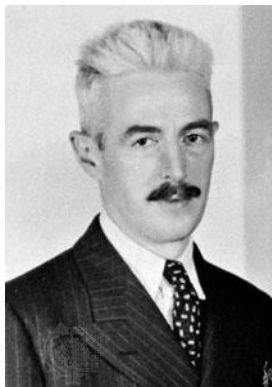
On the other hand, Sir Arthur was a lifelong advocate for justice. He wrote a pamphlet in support of the Boer War in South Africa at a time when the UK was being condemned for its actions (which is what he believes resulted in his knighthood) but within a few years he wrote against the horrors committed in the process of empire building and through his detective skills helped to get men he believed were unjustly imprisoned released.

In contrast, British blueblood Ian Fleming, created the character James Bond out of embellishments of his World War II experiences in naval intelligence, and according to at least one biographer, his own high-society tastes for hard drinking and womanizing. James Bond (named for the author of Mr. Fleming's favorite bird book) was "Ian Fleming day-dreaming in the third person" according to biographer John Pearson. It is safe to say, being the strong, suave, hunky, capable character portrayed in the highly successful James Bond movies made from Ian Fleming's mid-20th century novels is also the fantasy daydream of millions of men.



Ian Fleming was born into wealth and a rich heritage. His middle name was Lancaster because his mother's side of the family was descended from John of Gaunt, founder of the royal house of Lancaster. However, his father was killed in World War I, and that meant

young Ian had to work for a living. His occupations included banker and journalist besides author of 14 Bond novels. What you may not know about him? He is also the author of the children's book (made into a popular movie) *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.



The third of these mystery writers was highly popular half a century ago when his realistic, fast-paced stories were being made into movies and a TV show, but he is less likely to be known among the younger crowd, even though he created two characters whose *modus operandi* has been widely emulated. Dashiell Hammett had a number of jobs in his younger years including several years as a real detective for the then famous Pinkerton agency that helped inform his writing. He wrote over 90 stories, but his most famous book was *The Maltese Falcon* featuring the hard-boiled detective Sam Spade who was famously played by Humphrey Bogart in the movie version.

The second character he created was actually a trio – Nick and Nora Charles and their dog Asta. Mr. Hammett wrote only one book called *The Thin Man*, which featured a former detective who ostensibly gives up his career when he marries a wealthy socialite in Prohibition-era New York City until police call him for help in solving a murder. However, several Thin Man movies based on the characters were made in the 1930s (starring the popular William Powell and Myrna Loy), and in the 1950s a well-received television series was based on the characters, making it seem that Dashiell Hammett was more prolific than he was. Like Dashiell and his longtime paramour Lillian Hellman, Nick and Nora engage in lots of witty banter and spend lots of time in night clubs drinking prodigious amounts of alcohol, so that even though they are dealing with low-life characters and ugly crimes, they seem ever sophisticated and above the fray.



Talk about it

- Have you read the works of any of these authors? If so, which ones? Did you like them? Do any particularly stick in your memory?
- Have you seen the movies made from the authors' works? If so, are there any you consider especially good? Talk about your response.
- The biographical information given here is extremely abbreviated, but did you learn anything new? Would you be interested in reading more? If so, about whom?
- If none of these authors is your favorite mystery writer, who is?

Resources: Mostly Wikipedia

Trivia quiz: Mystery Writer Quotes

Three famous mystery writers were born in May. **Ian Fleming**, May 28, 1908, **Dashiell Hammet**, May 27, 1894 and **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** May 22, 1859. Mr. Fleming was the creator of James Bond, whose popular spy-hero was sophisticated, sexy, and glamorously dangerous. Nick Charles, the hero in Mr. Hammet's *Thin Man*, was a somewhat more domesticated James Bond. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, was the least glamorous, but so far, the most enduring hero of all.

Can you match these quotes to their author?

1. It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important.
 - a. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle ____
 - b. Ian Fleming ____
 - c. Dashiell Hammet ____
2. A horse is dangerous at both ends and uncomfortable in the middle.
 - a. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle ____
 - b. Ian Fleming ____
 - c. Dashiell Hammet ____
3. I deserve all the love you can spare me. And I want a lot more than I deserve.
 - a. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle ____
 - b. Ian Fleming ____
 - c. Dashiell Hammet ____
4. Men want a woman whom they can turn on and off like a light switch.
 - a. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle ____
 - b. Ian Fleming ____
 - c. Dashiell Hammet ____
5. I've been as bad an influence on _____ literature as anyone I can think of.
 - a. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle ____
 - b. Ian Fleming ____
 - c. Dashiell Hammet ____
6. You see, but you do not observe.
 - a. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle ____
 - b. Ian Fleming ____
 - c. Dashiell Hammet ____



Answers: 1. a 2. b 3. c 4. b 5. c 6. a

The missing word in 5. – which would have given it away – is “American.”

Discussion: A Life of Crime



Thriller filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock was born August 13, 1899 in England and died in 1980 in California. Although most famous for movies like “Psycho,” “Vertigo,” and “North by Northwest,” the award-winning director’s personal favorites were “Shadow of a Doubt” and “Rear Window.”

In 1967 Mr. Hitchcock was interviewed by Bryan Forbes and an audience member asked him, “What frightens you?”

He answered, “Policemen frighten me.”

Mr. Forbes: “Not English policemen surely?”

Mr. Hitchcock: “Oh, they are the worst. Because they are so polite.”

In another interview in 1963 with filmmaker Peter Bogdanovich, Mr. Hitchcock was asked about a widely-repeated story that his father sent him to jail at an early age. He answered, “I must have been five when I was sent along with a note to the chief of police, who read the note and promptly put me into a cell and locked the door for five minutes; and then let me out, saying, ‘That’s what we do to naughty little boys, you see.’ What effect that had on me at the time I can’t remember, but they say psychiatrically if you can discover the origins of this or that, it releases everything. I don’t think it released me from a natural fear of the police.”

In other places where he is quoted, he insisted, “I’m not against the police; I’m just afraid of them.” He also admitted to being easily frightened by small children, high places, and “that my next movie will not be as good as the last one.” He professed to doing his best to avoid difficulties and complications, and lived a quiet life, married to the same woman, Alma Reville from 1926 until his death in 1980; they were close collaborators, but avoided the “Hollywood scene.” At the same time, he said, “My good luck in life was to be a really frightened person. I’m fortunate to be a coward, to have a low threshold of fear, because a hero couldn’t make a good suspense film.”

But while he was widely known as a genius director, he didn’t always get to control how his pictures were filmed. Featuring famous landmarks in his films was one of his trademarks and he said in the Forbes interview that he waited about 15 years to put Mount Rushmore on the screen, but couldn’t quite film it as planned. “For example, the Department of Interiors step in and say, ‘You mustn’t have any character climbing over the faces of the presidents.’ You say, ‘Why not?’ They say, ‘Because this is the shrine of democracy. You must only have your characters climbing between the heads.’ I was defeated because I had a lovely image of Cary Grant sliding down Lincoln’s nose and then hiding in the nostril, reduced to having a sneezing fit. I was never allowed to do it.”



Mr. Hitchcock has been widely quoted as having disdain for actors, but in fact, he especially enjoyed working with certain actors, such as Cary Grant, James Stewart and Grace Kelly. Sometimes, however, their fame got in the way. In the movie “Suspicion,” Mr. Grant plays an

irresponsible cad named Johnnie, who sweeps a supposedly dowdy woman named Lina, (played by Joan Fontaine) off her feet, and marries her despite the disapproval of her wealthy father. Johnnie hopes to live off her father's generosity, but when that isn't forthcoming, Johnnie causes them to fall deeply in debt through his gambling and get rich schemes. Lina believes he has killed his friend Beaky and is now planning to kill her for her life insurance by offering her a glass of poisoned milk (which Mr. Hitchcock has made to glow in the dark by placing a light bulb inside). In the movie that was produced, she declines to drink the milk, and soon thereafter, in a dramatic scene, Johnnie resolves to face up to his responsibilities, and even go to jail for embezzlement. Lina also learns that Johnnie didn't kill Beaky, and she tells him that they will face the future together – a happy Hollywood ending because Cary Grant couldn't portray a murderer.



Here is the ending Alfred Hitchcock wanted: "Fontaine writes a letter to her mother, saying that she is in love with her husband, but she feels he is a murderer. She doesn't want to live anymore and she's willing to die by his hand. But she thinks society should be protected from him. He comes up with the fatal glass of milk, gives it to her. Before she drinks, she says, "Will you mail this letter to mother for me?" And she drinks the milk and dies. Fade out. Fade in on one short shot: a cheerful, whistling Cary Grant coming to the mail box and popping the letter in. Finish."

Resources:

Wikipedia, <http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/interviews/hitchcock.html>, and http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1999/hitchcock/interview/interview_2.html

Talk about it

- Are you familiar with Alfred Hitchcock movies? If so, are there any that you find especially memorable? Talk about them.
- Do you like scary movies generally? Why or why not?
- Do you think Alfred's first police encounter influenced his life? Explain.
- Alfred Hitchcock was known as a master of suspense – of revealing to the audience things the characters didn't know. He said, "There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it." Do you agree? Have you seen other movies that used this idea effectively?
- In describing how he was kept by the producers from portraying Cary Grant as a murderer, Alfred Hitchcock felt that he could sometimes tell a story better when the actors were less well known. Have you ever felt betrayed by seeing an actor in a role you didn't want to see him in?

Trivia Quiz – Hitchcock's Blonde Bombshells



Alfred Hitchcock loved to cast blondes for his female stars because, he said, "Blondes make the best victims. They're like virgin snow that shows up the bloody footprints." Here's a bit of background on seven of them.

Which statement about each star is false?

1. Grace Kelly starred in three Hitchcock films ("Rear Window," "To Catch a Thief" and "Dial M for Murder") before retiring at age 26 to marry Prince

Rainier of Monaco.

- a. Among the products for which she appeared as a model were Old Gold cigarettes. ____
- b. Bing Crosby proposed to her, but she turned him down. ____
- c. Her family had to pay a dowry of \$5 million for her to marry the prince. ____

2. Tippi Hedren starred in "Marnie" and "The Birds," the latter of which involved days of having dozens of live gulls, ravens and crows (with their beaks clamped shut) repeatedly thrown at her), a traumatizing event.

- a. Like Grace Kelly, whom she was meant to replace, she began her career as a model. ____
- b. She is the mother of Jamie Lee Curtis. ____
- c. She is an ardent animal rights activist and founded a wildlife rescue habitat in 1983. ____



3. British American actress Joan Fontaine starred in "Rebecca" and "Suspicion," and won an Academy Award for the latter.

- a. She was born Joan de Beauvoir de Havilland in London, but took her mother's stage name of Fontaine. ____
- b. She is the sister of Olivia de Havilland with whom she has had a lifelong feud. ____
- c. She was a sickly child and the family moved to California for her health. ____

4. Ingrid Bergman appeared in Hitchcock's "Spellbound" with Gregory Peck.

- a. She was a Danish actress who won three Academy Awards. ____
- b. She performed successfully in five languages. ____
- c. An affair with Italian director Roberto Rossellini while still married caused her to be denounced on the floor of the U.S Senate, proving that even in 1950 it was easily distracted by hyped-up scandals. ____

5. Of all Hitchcock's victims, Janet Leigh is most iconic due to her shower scene scream and early demise in "Psycho."



- a. In 1948, when she was just 21, she was hailed as the "Number 1 Glamour Girl" of Hollywood. ____
- b. She was married for the third time before she turned 24, but was married to her fourth husband for more than 40 years. ____
- c. She was the mother of Melanie Griffith. ____

6. Kim Novak starred opposite Jimmy Stewart in "Vertigo."

- a. She was born in Scandinavia of mixed European ancestry as Marilyn Novak. (A Hollywood studio changed her name to Kim.) ____
- b. Like other Hollywood stars of the era, she began her career as a model, touring the country as "Miss Deepfreeze." ____
- c. She has been married to a veterinarian for nearly 35 years and now raises horses and llamas on a ranch in Oregon. ____

7. Eva Marie Saint was the cool blonde double agent in "North by Northwest."

- a. Her first feature film role was opposite Marlon Brando in "On the Waterfront" for which she won an Academy Award. ____
- b. For her role opposite Cary Grant in "North by Northwest" Hitchcock cut her waist-length blonde hair short for "a more exotic look." ____
- c. She has been married four times. ____



Resource: Wikipedia biographies of the stars.

False statements:

- 1. c. Grace Kelly's family paid "only" a \$2 million dowry.
- 2. b. She is the mother of actress Melanie Griffith.
- 3. a. She was born in Tokyo, Japan where her father was a British patent attorney.
- 4. a. Ingrid Bergman was Swedish.
- 5. c. Janet Leigh was the mother of Jamie Lee Curtis from her marriage to Tony Curtis.
- 6. a. Kim Novak was born in Chicago and studied art there.
- 7. c. Eva Marie Saint has been married to just one man, director Jeffrey Hayden, since 1951.

Imagination: Can you take it from here?

In an interview of Alfred Hitchcock by Bryan Forbes (<http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/interviews/hitchcock.html>), after noting the famous landmark settings he was known for, a member of the audience asked Alfred Hitchcock if there was a setting he had not yet had the opportunity to make use of. He responded:



I once had an idea that I would like to open a film, say, at the Covent Garden Opera, or the Metropolitan, or the Scala in Milan. Maria Callas is on the stage singing an aria. Her head is tilted upwards. She sees in a box way up, a man approaching another man and stabbing him. She is approaching a high note and the high note turns to a scream. And it's the highest note that she has ever sounded in her life. The result of which, she gets a huge round of applause. She is then horrified to see the body falling out of the box and into the auditorium. Panic ensues. The curtain is lowered. Callas is in a state of hysteria. She is helped off the stage into her dressing room. She cries to be left alone. The people leave her. She immediately locks the door and dials a number on the phone.

There his vision ended. What do *you* think should happen next? Write your thoughts in the space below, or simply share them.

Do you have your own idea for a mystery plot? What is it?

Can you think of a mystery (book, TV show or movie) with a plot that you found especially fascinating? Describe it.



Alfred Hitchcock was known as a master of suspense rather than someone who dealt in blood and gore. What's your idea of a good scary movie?

Other authors, like Agatha Christie, focused on plot twists that led to a crime's solution. In reading her stories, we are rarely so involved with the characters that we are upset when they are killed off. Instead it is the solving of the crime that keeps us reading. Do you enjoy mysteries that encourage you to try to solve them yourself?

In a similar vein, the long-running Perry Mason TV series focused on courtroom trials, while current TV shows tend to focus on crime-solving forensic experts. Do you watch TV shows about solving crimes? Which ones appeal to you and why?



Nick and Nora Charles, the main characters in the Thin Man film series, seemed much more focused on having a good time than solving crimes. The movies are essentially comedies with clever banter between Nick and Nora and an array of odd characters who make appearances in their lives. Is that more your style? Why or why not? Do you require sophisticated heroes with high level action as in James Bond movies?

Imagination: Hitchcock Was a Name Clipper

My favorite wordsmith, Willard R. Espy, pointed out in the July 27th entry of his [*The Best of an Almanac of Words at Play*](#) that Alfred Hitchcock liked to make small incisions on movie star names and reflect on the results. Although we are not privy to his reflections, here are some examples of his work:

- Ill Cosby
- Irk Douglas
- Uke Ellington
- Lark Gable
- Reer Garson
- Orgie Jessel
- Ickey Rooney
- Rank Sinatra
- Lip Wilson
- Helley Winters

Whose names can *you* cut up for interesting results?

Think about Dick, Rich, John, Suzy, Linda, Jade . . .

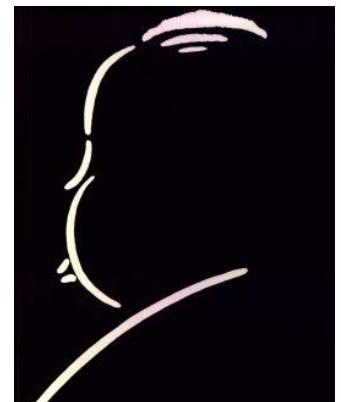
SidebarHitchcock's Cameos

Alfred Hitchcock became famous for appearing in cameo roles in his films, although the habit started accidentally because of low budgets and a shortage of actors. Usually he was just part of the background crowd, sometimes unusually dressed, such as wearing a bowler or cowboy hat. He used himself for comic relief in "Strangers on a Train," where his rotund shape is seen boarding the train with a double bass.

Sometimes adding that trademark required creativity. In the 1944 film "Lifeboat," about the survivors of a German U-boat attack, the action is shot entirely within a small boat, so Alfred Hitchcock can't suddenly appear as a fellow survivor. The dilemma was solved when the character played by William Bendix is shown reading a newspaper that features Mr. Hitchcock in a before and after ad for a weight loss product. Interestingly, according to <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000033/bio>, the 5' 7" Mr. Hitchcock battled obesity all his life, hitting a high of 300 pounds in the 1930s, but often dieted successfully, so the before and after pictures in the ad really are him.

In all, Mr. Hitchcock made such appearances in more than three dozen of his films. We are not surprised then when in "To Catch A Thief," he is seen sitting to the left of Cary Grant on a bus, and Mr. Grant's character gives the director a look as if to say, "Oh, no. Not you again!"

And that signature profile that so readily identifies him? Mr. Hitchcock drew it himself for a Christmas card one year.



Once an actress asked Alfred Hitchcock whether her right or left profile was better; he said,
"My dear, you are sitting on your best profile."

Discussion: English Queens of Crime

Dame Agatha Christie, who was born September 15, 1890, remains, according to the website www.agathachristie.com, the world's best known mystery writer. She said of herself, "I specialize in murders of quiet, domestic interest." Her two best known and beloved characters, both super sleuths, are Hercule Poirot, who appeared in 33 novels and 65 short stories, and Miss Jane Marple. Miss Marple was introduced in 1930 as an unmarried woman between 65 and 70 and appeared in 12 novels over a period of more than 40 years. (Joan Hickson portrayed her on TV as pictured on the next page.)



Hercule Poirot, (pictured here as portrayed on TV by David Suchet) however, is the more famous of the two; upon his death he became the only fictional character ever to be honored with an obituary on the front page of the New York Times. He first appeared in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, published in 1920. Although he was in love for three decades with Countess Vera Rossakoff, Monsieur Poirot would no doubt have been difficult to live with. His trusted sidekick and occasional narrator, Capt. Arthur Hastings, described the diminutive Belgian as so fastidious that "I believe a speck of dust would have caused him more pain than a bullet wound." Agatha Christie herself grew tired of him, calling him in 1960 (according to Wikipedia) a "detestable, bombastic, tiresome, ego-centric little creep," but was loathe to kill him off while he was still so popular with her readers.

Over the years the character of Hercule Poirot has appeared often on television and in movies by such varied actors as Charles Laughton, Peter Ustinov, Albert Finney (who was nominated for an academy award), Tony Randall (who played him for laughs) and Hugh Laurie (of "House" fame).

Agatha Christie was known for writing what were called "polite mysteries," and contemporary author P.D. James (born Phyllis Dorothy James), who at the time of this writing is past 90, at first followed in her footsteps. Now she is known for a focus on motivation, the relationships between characters, and exploring psychology and ethical issues in her writing. She is particularly well-known for two characters: the darkly brooding Chief-Inspector (later Commander) Adam Dalgliesh, and the courageous young Cordelia Gray.



Shortly after World War II began for Britain, Ms. James married Dr. Connor Bantry White, just before his departure for the Royal Army Medical Corps. They had two daughters, born during the war, and at first Phyllis stayed at home with them, coping on her husband's Army stipend. However, at the end of the war, according to an article found at <http://pbpl.physics.ucla.edu/~yoder/mystery/james-bio.html>,

Dr. White returned as "a sadly changed man: he had developed schizophrenia and was to be in and out of mental hospitals until his death in 1964. Not only was he difficult to live

with, but he had no war pension, and the family was very poor.” Showing the mettle of her female heroine, Ms. James took evening classes and first got a job as a hospital clerk. Eventually she “worked her way upward through the British Civil Service until in 1968 . . . she became a Principal in the criminal policy department of the British Home Office,” a position she held until 1979, when the success of her writing career enabled her to retire from one career in favor of the other. Her writing success had begun with her first published book in 1962, helped along, no doubt, by her criminal policy work. But if she was, in part, Cordelia Gray, does the capable, but emotionally challenged Adam Dalgliesh reflect characteristics of her husband? She once said, “All fiction is largely autobiographical and much autobiography is, of course, fiction.”

Talk about it

- Have you read Agatha Christie’s mysteries or seen them portrayed on television or in the movies? Did you enjoy them?
- Do you have a preference between the characters of Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot? Which appeals more to you and why?
- Agatha Christie’s mysteries are cleverly written but they are not usually graphically violent or terribly suspenseful. Does that make them more or less appealing to you than the stories of modern mystery writers? Why?
- Have you read any of P.D James’ books and do they appeal to you?
- P.D. James once wrote, “Time didn’t heal, but it anesthetized. The human mind could only feel so much.” Do you agree?
- Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot are fun, but they are “characters” while Cordelia Gray and Adam Dalgliesh are more well-rounded people whose crime-solving skills are only a part of each plot. Do you prefer one type over the other? Which one and why?



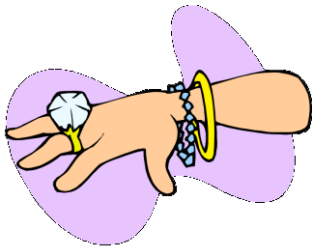
Agatha Christie seems to have been much more light-hearted than P.D. James. Here are two of her quotes that might reveal why:

- One of the luckiest things that can happen to you in life is, I think, to have a happy childhood.
- I married an archaeologist because the older I grow, the more he appreciates me.

Trivia quiz: What's the Critical Clue?

Here are four short mysteries adapted from the game [MindTrap](#). No high tech knowledge is needed to solve them. What is the giveaway clue in each?

1. Jim Bond was a local detective hired by a large construction company to stop employee theft. The person he was told to watch was Slime, who passed through security each night with a wheelbarrow full of scrap lumber, discarded electrical wires and chunks of concrete. The guards checked the contents daily, but never found anything of value. What did Jim Bond report back to the construction company owners?
2. When the police entered the scene of the crime, they found a man whose head lay on his desk surrounded by a pool of blood. On the floor to his right was a handgun. Powder burns on his right temple indicated he was shot at close range. On his desk was a suicide note, and his right hand held the pen that had written it. The police determined that the death occurred within the last hour and continued to look for clues. Why were they certain it was not a suicide?



3. Susie Hotbody was a lifeguard who ran up heavy credit card debts. She thought that if she reported the theft of some of her expensive jewelry – rings, a necklace and a watch – the insurance money she collected could help pay off those debts. She called the police and when an investigator arrived, Susie reported that she had left the jewelry on the bathroom counter before she went to bed, and the next morning it was missing. She said the pieces were heirlooms that she wore every day and that she was devastated by the loss. Aside from the lack of signs of a break-in, why didn't the investigator buy her story?
4. When a jewelry store was robbed, the sack with the stolen jewels was found in some bushes several miles from town. The police guessed it was the work of either Slug or Slime, but they made no immediate move to arrest them. Two days later, they brought the pair to the station and immediately arrested the guilty party. What was the giveaway?

Answers to mysteries:

1. Slime was stealing wheelbarrows.
2. If it had been a suicide, the last thing in his hand would be the gun, not the pen.
3. If she wore the jewelry every day, as a lifeguard there would be white skin where the items covered her body. Her tan was uninterrupted.
4. The bushes where the jewelry was found were poison ivy. Slug was covered with a rash and immediately arrested.

Trivia quiz: Solve the Mystery

The questions below were adapted from the game “30 Second Mysteries,” which provides clues and asks players to identify fictional characters, famous people and objects with the fewest clues for the most points. We are giving just one set of clues and hope you can catch on with relative ease. (But it’s always good for your brain to look up the answers.)



Can you fill in the blank?

1. An oversized rodent has so far lived more than 75 years and has become famous all over the world. What is his name? _____
2. As part of his work, a man climbs a ladder and becomes trapped in a glass booth. The man seems perplexed, but is not in visible trouble. Some people watch, some people offer money, and others turn away. What is the man’s occupation? _____
3. Nearly 40 years ago a man who tried out a sport played by millions was watched by millions (on TV) because the game had never been played in that location before. Where was he and what was the sport?

4. Like most of us most of the time, American Mr. Smith carries pictures of his family and pictures of other people to whom he is not related. Who are the other people whose pictures he carries and why does he carry them?

5. In spite of the advice of others, an elderly woman begins an unusual diet. She never eats the same thing twice, each meal is increasingly larger, and she dies of the last thing she eats. Who is she and how did she die?

6. A man is in charge of more than two dozen horses which are ridden all day and sometimes into the night, but no one charges him with cruelty. Why not?

7. Ben has a high profile and an easily recognizable face. He entertains many visitors and his picture travels all over the world. What services does he provide and where is his home? _____

8. A European citizen long ago tried unsuccessfully for years to get financial backing for a commercial venture. When he finally received funding, he used up the money without meeting his objective, and yet his backers were delighted with the results and he's still famous today. Who was the man?

9. A man works frequently with police to identify criminals, even though he is not a witness to the crimes. And even though many criminals are never caught, the police do not hesitate to ask for his help again. What does this man do? _____

10. On a sunny May day, a young driver hops into a car to go for a holiday drive of hundreds of miles and ends up back where he started just a few hours later. Where is he driving?

To order the game **30 Second Mysteries**, [click here](#).

Answers:

1. Mickey Mouse



2. a mime

3. Astronaut Buzz Aldrin played golf on the moon

4. The pictures are probably of Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Andrew Jackson and other American leaders on U.S. money and coins. He carries them to buy things.

5. The Old Lady who swallowed a fly, died of swallowing a horse

6. The horses are on a carousel

7. London's Big Ben provides the time

8. Christopher Columbus

9. The answer in the game version (which came out in 1995) was "sketch artist" and included an additional clue that the man's name (Art) defined his occupation. Today there are many other types of forensic experts whose skills help police behind the scenes.

10. At the Indianapolis 500 racetrack

Word game: Put the Clues Together

Mystery writers must put together a series of clues to solve a crime in a way that will hold readers' interest. Madlibs is a game which asks player to select words to fill in the blanks for a silly story. This week we've combined those two ideas to let you write your own mystery.

From each of the following five sets of 3-letter syllables, create eight words for the fill-in-the-blanks exercise at the end. Choose one word in each group to create your own story.

Choose from these eight to select the robber.

bis	cer	_____
but	fer	_____
che	hop	_____
dan	key	_____
edi	ler	_____
gol	nce	_____
joc	rub	_____
pri	tor	_____

Choose from these eight to select his/her pet.

bea	lot	_____
can	ana	_____
dra	her	_____
gop	ary	_____
igu	gon	_____
jag	rot	_____
ace	uar	_____
par	ver	_____

Choose from these eight to select the place where the robbery happened.

cas	ace	_____
cir	gle	_____
des	urb	_____
jun	ino	_____
lag	cus	_____
mar	ert	_____
pal	ina	_____
sub	oon	_____

Choose from these eight to select the food in which the drug was hidden.

cav	ale	_____
ecl	due	_____
fon	let	_____
kab	ini	_____
ome	air	_____
pan	iar	_____
qui	obs	_____
tam	che	_____

Choose from these eight to select the robber hid the stolen item.

bak	ern	_____
bla	lor	_____
cav	est	_____
cha	ery	_____
clo	ono	_____
for	pel	_____
kim	set	_____
par	zer	_____

Here's the story. Fill in the blanks with one word from each group:

The _____ , who had a pet _____ that followed him/her everywhere, was envious of Mr. Gullible's diamond necklace. She/He visited Mrs. Gullible in a _____ and put a sleeping drug in Mrs. Gullible's _____. When she fell asleep, she/he stole the necklace and hid it in a _____.

Answers:

Robber – bishop, butler, cherub, dancer, editor, golfer, jockey, prince

Pet – beaver, canary, dragon, gopher, iguana, jaguar, ocelot, parrot

Location – casino, circus, desert, jungle, lagoon, marina, palace, suburb

Food – caviar, éclair, fondue, kabobs, omelet, panini, quiche, tamale

Hiding place – bakery, blazer, cavern, chapel, closet, forest, kimono, parlor

Word Game: Hidden Connections

Author Studs Terkel once said, "I love to connect seemingly unconnected phenomena." He called this his Joycean (after James Joyce) stream of consciousness thinking. The example he gave was a memory of Lil Hardin Armstrong, Louis Armstrong's first wife, "horsing around" at home playing a Chopin polonaise that he connected with another memory of classical pianist Garrick Ohlsson, the winner of the Chopin award in 1970. Their lives never crossed in real life, but their love of Chopin crossed in Mr. Terkel's mind.

Using that idea as a jumping off point, each of the following groups of words has a hidden common connection.

Can you find the hidden word within each word that connects them?

Underline the word within the word that ties each group together.

1. Pets

selfish pumice boondoggle vacate

2. Animal parts

retailers doubleheader elegant harmony

3. On the head

appearance diagnosed journeyed eclipse

4. Insects

mother gruffly broomstick wildebeest

5. Pastries

tribunal showpiece corollary distorted

6. Tipsy drinks

disproportional breadcrumbs forsake chewiness

7. Cereals

unicorn avarice waistcoats branch

8. Kitchen supplies

expanse backslide depot radish

9. Clothing

participants hassock shattered addressed



10. U.S. money
dimension accent coincidence quarterback
11. Foreign money
supermarket brandish hyena neurology
12. Geometry
cleanliness deaconess disentangle planetarium
13. Flowers/plants
alabaster prosecute daiquiris passageway
14. Trees
happiness croaked backwash steakhouse
15. Fruit
reappear compliment consolidated bullfight
16. Occupations
crispy dovetail statutory tractor



Did you find these easy or hard? Did you enjoy them?
Would you have been able to figure them out
if we hadn't given you the category for each set?

Answers:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. fish, mice, dog, cat | 9. pants, sock, hat dress |
| 2. tail, head, leg, arm | 10. dime, cent, coin, quarter |
| 3. ear, nose, eye, lip | 11. mark, rand, yen, euro |
| 4. moth, fly, tick, bee | 12. line, cone, angle, plane |
| 5. bun, pie, roll, torte | 13. aster, rose, iris, sage |
| 6. port, rum, sake, wine | 14. pine, oak, ash, teak |
| 7. corn, rice, oats, bran | 15. pear, lime, date, fig |
| 8. pans, lid, pot, dish | 16. spy, vet, tutor, actor |

Discussion: Winchester Mystery House



Many houses are thought by some to be haunted, but few are “mystery houses” – houses with inexplicable parts. The Winchester Mystery House™ in San Jose, California is one. Imagine a house so strange that people still flock to visit it nearly a century after your death. Then imagine that the person who built it was a recluse who never gave an interview, kept no journal, and left no records of why she did

what she did. That’s the Winchester House.

It’s a house with stairs that end at a ceiling; interior doors that open on brick walls and exterior second story doors that open to emptiness – a long drop. At the time of Mrs. Winchester’s death, the sprawling mansion contained 160 rooms, 2,000 doors, 10,000 windows, 47 stairways, 47 fireplaces, 13 bathrooms, and 6 kitchens, with construction sprawled over six acres. Before the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, it had a seven story copula. It contained many innovative devices, many expensive features (Tiffany windows, parquet floors, a grand ballroom), and much that will never be explained.



Sarah Winchester, born Sarah Lockwood Pardee about 1840, was known as the “Belle of New Haven” (Connecticut) before she married William Winchester. His father had founded the Winchester Repeating Arms Company, maker of the gun that “won the West.” Sarah spoke four languages and played the piano beautifully, and they apparently had a happy, very social married life. But a few years after her marriage, her infant daughter died, and Mrs. Winchester never fully recovered from the depression that followed. In March of 1881, her husband died of tuberculosis.

After the second tragedy, it is believed that Mrs. Winchester sought help from a medium in Boston who suggested that her family was being haunted by the spirits of the American Indians, Civil war soldiers and others who had been killed by Winchester rifles. She was advised to move west and appease the spirits by building a great house for them. As long as construction of the house never ceased, she was told, her own life would not be in danger.

In 1884 Mrs. Winchester purchased an unfinished farmhouse, which was then three miles from San Jose (and is now surrounded by the city). For the next 38 years, 24 hours a day, construction never ceased. It was paid for by the enormous fortune she inherited from her husband’s company. But while building a house that could not help

but call attention to itself, Mrs. Winchester remained secluded – behind a tall cypress hedge that surrounded the house and by a dark veil she wore at all times.



Strange occurrences were reported – a bell that rang at midnight and 2:00 a.m., perhaps to mark the time of arrival and departure of spirits. It is said she communed with them every night in the blue room at the center of the house. But she also feared them, and reportedly never slept two nights in a row in the same bedroom. (She had about 40 to choose from.) When she was

briefly trapped in a front bedroom as a result of the 1906 earthquake, she took it as a sign from the spirits that she had spent too much time on the front of the house and never opened the ornate front door again – supposedly even when President Theodore Roosevelt came to call.

Some of the house's oddities can perhaps be attributed to Mrs. Winchester's severe arthritis in her later years. For example, the Switchback Staircase has seven flights with a total of 44 steps, but rises only about nine feet – each step is only about two inches high. That may have enabled her to get from the first to second floor more easily, but the house also had three elevators to aid her.

When Mrs. Winchester finally died – peacefully in her sleep – in her early 80s, her niece, who had also served as her secretary, inherited all her personal property. That did not include the house itself, but did include virtually everything in the house, plus literally train car loads of furnishings and fabrics that had never made it into the house. The value was nearly priceless as many items were one of a kind and of the highest quality, but the niece promptly auctioned it all off. That's its own mystery.

Talk about it

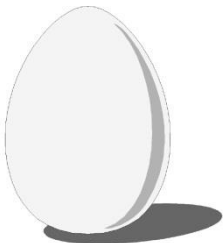
- Was the niece merely greedy for the money the furnishings would bring, or did she wish to be rid of every vestige of her aunt's strange, unsettling life?
- Why did none of her relatives or former employees – who outlived their employer by decades – speak up after her death?
- Was Mrs. Winchester eccentric, insane, profoundly frightened?
- Have you ever visited the house? Do you have insights to share?

Trivia quiz: Can You Figure Out the Logic?

Mystery writers are adept at coming up with unusual explanations. Lateral thinking is solving problems creatively, using reasoning that is not always immediately obvious. Paul Sloane and Des MacHale have written a number of quiz books on the concept. The following questions have been adapted from their [Tricky Lateral Thinking Puzzles](#) and [Improve Your Lateral Thinking](#) (To learn more or order, click on the titles.)

Can you come up with a logical explanation for the following?

1. A man went around the world in a ship, but was always in sight of land. How could that be?
2. A man sailed single-handed around the world in a small boat, but was always in sight of land. How could that be?
3. A politician made a speech that saved his life before he gave it. How?
4. 75 years ago a woman named Bertha travelled 30 miles a day in the course of her work. She didn't use a wheeled vehicle, and never had problems with traffic or weather. What did she do?
5. Jason spent two days in the hospital. He was neither sick nor injured but had to be carried out when he left. Why?
6. Denise died at sea and Edward on land. People were pleased when Edward died, but even more pleased when Denise died. Why?
7. What multiplies by division?
8. What gets higher as it falls?
9. How can you drop a raw egg onto a concrete floor without cracking it?
10. Divide 20 by a half and add 10. What's the answer?



Recent research has shown that people who read the endings of the books (mysteries or not) enjoy them more than those who read straight through. Apparently readers can pay more attention to the writer's style and the unfolding story (and clues provided, if it's a mystery) when they know how everything is going to turn out.

- Have you ever read the end of the story at the outset?
- If you then went back to read it from the beginning, did *you* enjoy the story more?

When I read lateral thinking books like Paul Sloane's, I jump right to the solution. I am less interested in learning to think laterally than in finding out the answer and how the author was able to write deceptively about what is often an ordinary occurrence. If you, too, jumped straight for the answers, we perhaps think alike.

Answers:

1. He was in a spaceship.
2. He sailed around Antarctica.
3. The politician was American President Teddy Roosevelt who was shot in the chest shortly before he was scheduled to give a speech in Milwaukee. The folded speech in his breast pocket slowed the bullet enough to save his life, and he made the speech later on the same day. (Guns were less deadly in 1912.)
4. She was an elevator operator.
5. He was a newborn baby.
6. They were hurricanes.
7. An amoeba
8. Snow
9. Easily; it's very hard to crack concrete, and an egg won't do it.
10. 50. Dividing by half is the same as multiplying by 2.

I am also interested in learning new information. For example:

The police put up notices warning the public about a certain type of crime that actually helped the criminals. The crime? Pickpocketing. When tourists saw the signs "Beware of pickpockets," they instinctively touched their wallets to make sure they were safe, and inadvertently pointed out to the pickpockets standing nearby where the tourists kept their wallets, making them easier to steal!



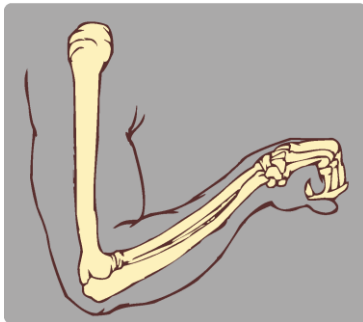
It is now customary for most people to pour their tea first, and then add milk, but it was once a sign of the wealth to do so. Why? Rich people had bone china that could withstand the hot tea, but poor people had cheap crockery that cracked from the heat of hot tea. Pouring their cold milk in first helped prevent such cracks.

Trivia quiz: Mysteries Solved

Many of life's mysteries are not of a criminal variety.

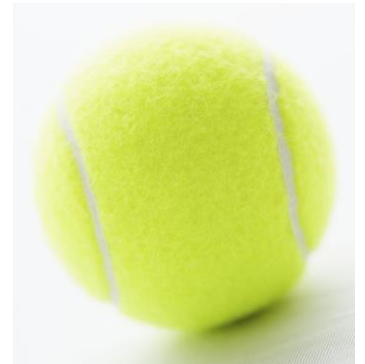
Can you choose the answer that ends the mystery?

1. Why does it hurt to chew on aluminum foil?
 - a. Because the silver in your fillings creates an electrical charge when it comes in contact with tinfoil ____
 - b. Because tinfoil edges can be sharper than you think ____



2. Why does it hurt to hit your “funny bone”?
 - a. Because our elbows are sensitive to being hit just like our tail bones ____
 - b. Because we're actually hitting our highly sensitive ulnar nerve which is close to the skin at the elbow ____

3. Why do we get goose bumps?
 - a. They're caused by tiny muscles that tighten around our hair follicles that help to keep us warm when we are cold. ____
 - b. They're an evolutionary reaction to fear that – when we were hairier creatures – caused our hair to stand on end and make us look bigger to our enemies. ____
4. Why are tennis balls fuzzy?
 - a. To slow them down and keep them from bouncing too high ____
 - b. To make them easier for players to grip before they serve them ____

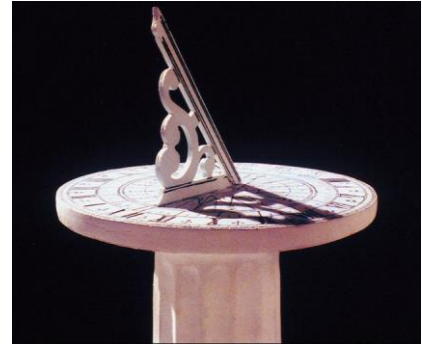


5. Why does the Easter bunny deliver eggs?
 - a. Because it's easier to imagine a bunny carrying a basket than a chicken doing so ____
 - b. It stems from an ancient legend when the goddess of spring turned a frozen bird into a hare to help it survive a harsh winter. ____
6. Why is there an eye on the pyramid on the U.S. dollar bill?
 - a. It's the “All Seeing Eye” that was a symbol of a secret society many of the Founding Fathers belonged to. ____
 - b. It is the “Eye of Providence,” a classic Egyptian symbol for wisdom and prosperity. ____

7. Why do clocks run clockwise?

a. The first complex inner working of the gears were designed to work that way and all clockmakers have followed suit ever since.

b. The hands (and numbers) mimic the movements of the shadows on the first clocks: sundials. ____



8. Why do ants seem to congregate on sidewalks?

a. Because it's where people tend to drop bits of food and drink (Ants are industrious, but not opposed to easy pickings) ____

b. Because the sidewalks are cozily warm to the ants ____

c. Because the pheromone trail ants leave between nest and food sources is easier to detect on sidewalks ____

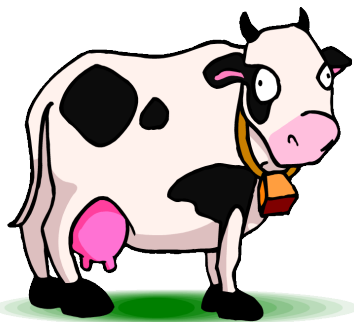
d. Because the dark ants are more visible on white sidewalks. Ants are really everywhere. ____

e. All of the above ____

9. Why do dogs walk around in circles before lying down?

a. They are trying to make up their minds about which position to sleep in ____

b. It's a leftover habit from when dogs were wild and had to flatten a space for sleeping ____



10. Why are cows usually milked from the right side?

a. Because most people are right-handed and that allows them more room to maneuver ____

b. Because the udder side doesn't work as well ____

Sources:

[**Why Do Clocks Run Clockwise?: An Imponderables Book**](#)

by David Feldman

Mental_floss magazine, Volume 2, Issue 4. Subscribe at <http://www.mentalfloss.com/>

Answers:

1. a

3. b

5. b

7. b

9. b

2. b

4. a

6. b

8. e

10. a

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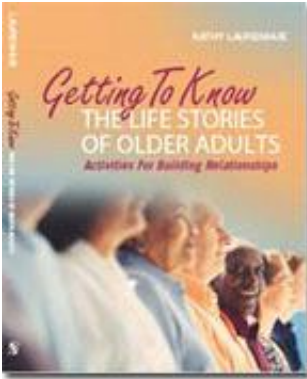
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- 2) From her mother, a light-hearted touch that seeks out what's amusing

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- Variety Is Vital to a Vigorous Mind
- Humor in Dementia
- Alzheimer's Disease: Stop the Fear-Mongering
- The Logic Behind Illogical Behavior in People with Dementia

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