



Synopsis

Mark Ram and Phillip Jenkins are friends but also rivals competing for the same piano scholarship. Ram, who is also a medical student, decides to dose Jenkins with a tiny amount of arsenic on the day of the competition. This, he hopes, will be enough to give his friend a nasty upset stomach that he will put down to exam nerves, but which will be enough to stop Jenkins from winning. Things go wrong: Jenkins is too nervous to eat and refuses the poisoned yoghurt Ram offers him; and Mrs Flagger, who looks after the two young men, finds the rest of Ram's arsenic in his sock drawer, mistakes it for sugar and puts it in the sugar bowl. Ram drinks a large number of cups of sweet coffee and poisons himself. He feels the pains coming on while waiting to play in the competition, comes home and finds his arsenic has disappeared. He assumes that Jenkins has poisoned him and sends Mrs Flagger out for dimercaprol, the only antidote to arsenic (thereby showing he knows perfectly well what is affecting him). However he dies and Phillip Jenkins, who has won the competition, is arrested for his murder.

Questions

- 1 The arsenic was in both the yoghurt and the sugar. Which one killed Ram?
- 2 Who put the arsenic in the sugar?
- 3 Where had Mrs Flagger found the arsenic?
- 4 Did Mrs Flagger know that it was arsenic?
- 5 Did Mrs Flagger poison Mark Ram deliberately or by accident?
- 6 When Ram came home from the Academy of Music, what was the first thing he did?
- 7 Why?
- 8 Who had put the arsenic in the drawer?
- 10 Who brought the arsenic into the house?
- 11 Why did Ram try so hard to get Jenkins to eat the yoghurt?
- 12 There was very little arsenic in the yoghurt, not enough to kill a person. Why?
- 13 If Phillip Jenkins had eaten the yoghurt what would have happened to him?
- 14 Who would have won the scholarship if Jenkins had eaten the yoghurt?
- 15 How did Ram know so much about arsenic?
- 16 What did Ram think when he found he had been poisoned?

THE ARSENIC SONATA

For higher levels

- 1) Put students into groups of three
- 2) Give each student a different letter (not the letter from Sherlock Holmes)
- 3) Tell students to read their letter and memorise the contents well enough to be able to tell the other students in the group about it.
- 4) Students tell each other the contents of their letter (they don't read the letter)
- 5) Write the names of the three main characters on the board.
- 6) The groups talk together to solve the case.
- 7) Ask the whole class the questions to make sure that they have solved the case correctly.

Optional homework – Give students all three letters and they write out the solution in the form of a letter from Sherlock Holmes to Inspector Lestrade.

For lower levels

- 1) Put students into three groups.
- 2) Give each member of each group a copy of one of the letters.
- 3) Students read their letter together and discuss the contents with the members of their group.
- 4) When students have nearly finished reading, write on the board 'What are the main points of your text?'
- 5) Tell each group to practice re-telling the story of their text in pairs if possible.
- 6) Make sure each student has practised re-telling the story.
- 7) Monitor the students and make sure they have got the main points – ask questions from the list if necessary.
- 8) Write the names of the three main characters on the board.
- 9) Students now form groups of three (one from each original group) and talk together to solve the case.
- 10) Monitor the students but keep a low profile – if students get stuck ask some of the key questions if necessary.
- 11) Ask the whole class the questions to make sure that they have solved the case correctly.

Optional homework – Give students all three letters and they write out the solution in the form of a letter from Sherlock Holmes to Inspector Lestrade.

14, Albert Crescent
London

18th January 1886

Dear Mr Holmes,

My name is Isabel Flagger. I cleaned and cooked for poor Mr Ram and Mr Jenkins. Mr Ram is dead now and Mr Jenkins is in prison accused of killing him. I feel sure that is not true. The two boys were friends. Mr Jenkins is a good young man, Mr Holmes, he is not a murderer.

Anyway, I will tell you everything I can remember about what happened on the day Mr Ram died. That morning, 16th January, while the young gentlemen were having their baths I went upstairs to put away their clothes. In Mr Ram's room I found a little bag of sugar among his socks in the drawer. 'You silly young gentleman,' I thought, 'you shouldn't keep sugar with the socks, it's unhygienic.' And so I put it in the sugar bowl in the dining room.

At nine o'clock the two young gentlemen left the house together - they had an exam or something. At about eleven o'clock, Mr Ram returned home alone. His face was as white as a sheet. Without saying a word he ran upstairs to his room. I followed him up. He had opened his sock drawer and was looking at them. 'Mrs Flagger,' he said, 'he's done it! Quickly, run to the chemist's. Ask for two hundred grams of dimercaprol. But hurry, there is no time to lose!'

And so I ran out across the park, under the railway bridge and into the High Street. I hurried into Fergusson the chemist's and went to the front of the queue. 'This is an emergency,' I said. 'Two hundred grams of ...' That was it. I had forgotten the name. So back I ran, Mr Holmes, down the High Street, under the railway bridge and across the park.

Mr Ram was in the bathroom, his shirt yellow with vomit. 'D I M E R C A P R O L,' he spelt out, with great difficulty. This time I wrote it down. By the time I got back with the medicine half an hour later, he was unconscious. I called the doctor, but it was too late to save his life.

Mr Jenkins wasn't even in the house when Mr Ram died. I am positive that he is innocent. Please, Mr Holmes, investigate this case. Help get poor Mr Jenkins out of prison.

Isabel Flagger

17th January 1886

Dear Mr. Holmes,

You don't know me, but my name is Phillip Jenkins. I am accused of murdering my best friend Mark Ram. I didn't do it, Mr Holmes. I need your help.

Mark and I were both pianists. Yesterday was an important day for us, because it was the day of the Mozart Young Pianist Prize, and we were both very nervous. When I came down for breakfast yesterday morning, Mark was already at the table drinking strong black coffee with lots of sugar. Mark's hands were shaking as he lifted the coffee cup. I never have coffee, only yoghurt, which I prepare myself the day before. On this occasion Mark jumped up and went into the kitchen to bring me my yoghurt. He had never done that before. 'Here you are Philip,' he said, 'a little bit of breakfast and you'll play much better in the competition.'

'No thanks, Mark, I'm much too nervous to eat,' I said as Mark poured himself another cup of coffee.

Mark looked even more worried. 'Come on, you must. Just one glass of yoghurt. 'Please, Phillip, have it for me. Please.' I shook my head. 'Now I've brought the yoghurt, you have to eat it!' Mark was shouting now, and he seemed really angry.

'No, Mark, I can't, but thanks anyway.' Mark looked at me furiously and drank some more coffee.

After that he spoke no more to me. We travelled to the Academy of Music for the competition in silence, and he didn't even reply when I spoke to him in the bus. He was the same while we were sitting waiting to play in front of the judges. Then, five minutes before the start of the competition, Mark suddenly stood up. He seemed to be in pain. He looked at me with hatred in his eyes. 'Damn you,' he said, 'you're cleverer than I thought!' and he ran out of the Academy.

When I got home that evening after winning the competition, I found that Mark was dead, and I was arrested for his murder. But I didn't do it, Mr Holmes. I know nothing about it. Please help me!

Phillip Jenkins

221B Baker Street
London

18TH January 1886

Dear Inspector Lestrade,

Thank you for your letter. I think that you should release Phillip Jenkins from prison as he had nothing to do with the death of Mark Ram.

Ram himself got the arsenic in order to make Jenkins too ill to win the scholarship. He put just enough arsenic in his friend's yoghurt to give him a violent stomach upset on the day of the competition. It was not, however, Ram's intention to kill his friend.

Unfortunately for Ram, Mrs Flagger, the woman who looked after the two young men, found the rest of Ram's arsenic among his socks where he had hidden it. Thinking it was sugar, she put it in the sugar bowl. As a result Ram himself took a fatal dose of the poison with his coffee at breakfast, while Jenkins, too nervous to eat, refused to touch his poisoned yoghurt despite Ram's forceful encouragement.

While waiting to play at the Academy of Music, Ram began to feel extremely ill. Fearing the worst, he hurried home to see if the arsenic was still in the drawer. Finding that it wasn't, his last act before he died was to send Mrs Flagger out for dimercaprol. How many people have ever heard of this medicine and know that it is the only antidote to arsenic poisoning? The fact that Ram's immediate reaction on being poisoned was to ask for it shows very clearly that he knew exactly what he had taken. His detailed knowledge of poisons was of course due to his medical studies.

Ram died under a misconception. As he fled from the Academy of Music, he said to Jenkins, 'You're cleverer than I thought'. He assumed that Jenkins had discovered what he was up to and had poisoned him. Clearly he believed that the rest of the world was as crooked as he was.

Sherlock Holmes

A fable of a bird and her chicks

Once upon a time a mother bird and her three chicks wanted to cross a river. She put the first one under her wing and started flying across.

As she flew she said, 'Tell me, child when I'm old will you carry me under your wing the way I'm carrying you now?'

'Of course,' replied the chick. 'What a question!' 'Ah,' said the mother bird, 'you're lying' With that she let the chick slip, and it fell in the river and drowned.

The mother went back for the second chick, which she took under her wing. Once more as she was flying across the river, she said, 'Tell me, child, when I'm old, will you carry me under your wing the way I'm carrying you now?'

'Of course,' replied the chick. 'What a question!'

'Ah,' said the mother bird, 'you're lying.' With that she let the second chick slip, and it also slip, and it also drowned.

Then the mother went back for the third chick, which she took under her wing. Once more she asked in a mid-flight, 'Tell me, child, when I am old, will you carry me under your wing the way I'm carrying you now?' 'No, mother,' replied the third chick. 'How could I? By then I'll have chick of my own to carry.'

'Ah, my dearest child,' said the mother bird, 'you're the one who tells the truth.' With that she carried the third chick to the other bank of the river.

A fable of a bird and her chicks

DISCUSSION

1. Is it our duty to look after our parents when they grow old or should they go into an Old People's Home? What normally happens in your country
2. Today's story is a traditional Yiddish tale which takes a humorous look at this difficult problem that many of us will have to face one day.
3. *Narrate the story.*
4. *Pause after the mother bird says 'Ah, you're lying' for the first time and ask the students to predict what follows. What do you think the mother bird is going to do next?*
5. *Arrange the student in groups of three for a role-play. **Student A** takes the part of an elderly parent, **student B** the parent's grown-up daughter, and **student C** the daughter's husband. The question under discussion is whether the parent should go in to an Old People's Home or not. The daughter feels guilty about putting her mother into the Home but her husband feels it would be for the best in view of the old woman's condition.*

Student A: You want to live an independent life and don't like the idea of going into a Home. You feel that you still have a valuable role to play and that you can help your daughter to look after her children. You blame your son-in-law for the situation because you think he doesn't like you and that's why he proposed the idea.

Student B: You're a middle-aged woman with two young children and a full-time job. Your elderly mother lives with you and needs a lot of attention. You're finding it increasingly difficult to cope with everything but you feel it's your duty to look after her.

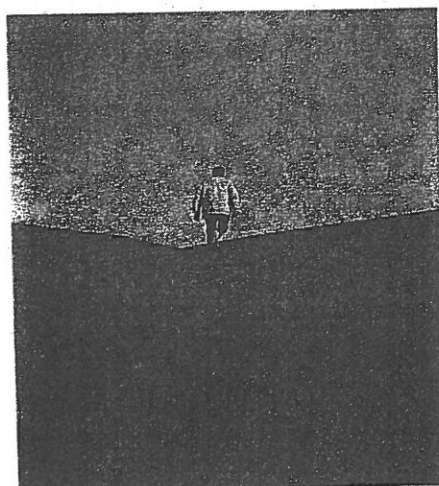
**A fable of a
bird and her
chicks**

Student C: Your wife is suffering from stress and you're worried about her health. You feel she has too much to cope with and that it would be better if her mother went into a Home where she could be properly looked after.





Communication activity



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/78/Desert_Leader.jpg

Introduction

This is a problem to be solved by groups of 8-10 people. The situation described is based on over 2,000 actual cases in which men or women lived or died depending on the survival decisions they made. Your own 'life' or 'death' will depend on how well your group can share its knowledge to reach decisions.

The situation

It is approximately 10.000 am in mid-July and you have crash-landed in the Sonora Desert, South West USA. Your light, twin-engine plane containing the bodies of the pilot and co-pilot has completely burnt out, only the frame remaining. None of the rest of you has been injured.

The pilot was unable to notify anyone of your position before you crashed. However, ground sightings taken shortly before the crash suggested that you are about 65 miles off-course from your originally filed flight plan. A few moments before the crash the pilot indicated that the nearest known habitation was a mining camp 70 miles away in a North North-East direction.

The desert survival problem

The immediate area is quite flat and appears to be rather barren except for the occasional cactus. The last weather report indicated that the temperature would reach 110°F (43°C). You are dressed in light-weight clothing - short-sleeved shirts, shorts, socks and leather shoes. Everyone has a handkerchief. Collectively your pockets contain €1.25 in change, €81 in notes, a packet of cigarettes and a ball-point pen.

The problem

Before the plane caught fire, your group was able to salvage the 15 items listed below.

1. As an individual, rank these items in order of their importance for your survival, starting with '1' for the most important, down to '15' for the least important. You may assume that the number of survivors is the same as the number of members in your group and that they have decided to stick together. Write the numbers in the first column and *do not* discuss your ranking with anyone else at this stage.
2. Now get together with the other members of your group to discuss the problem and write down the numbers for the new order of importance which you have agreed in the second column.

Scoring

You will be provided with an 'official' ranking sheet. After you have completed points '1' and '2' above, compare the ranking which you as an individual gave each item and subtract the lower figure from the higher one. Write the difference in the column headed *Individual Difference Score*. When you have finished, add up all the figures in that column and make a note of the total. Do the same for the ranking which your group decided, noting the difference in the column headed *Group Difference Score*, and write down the total.

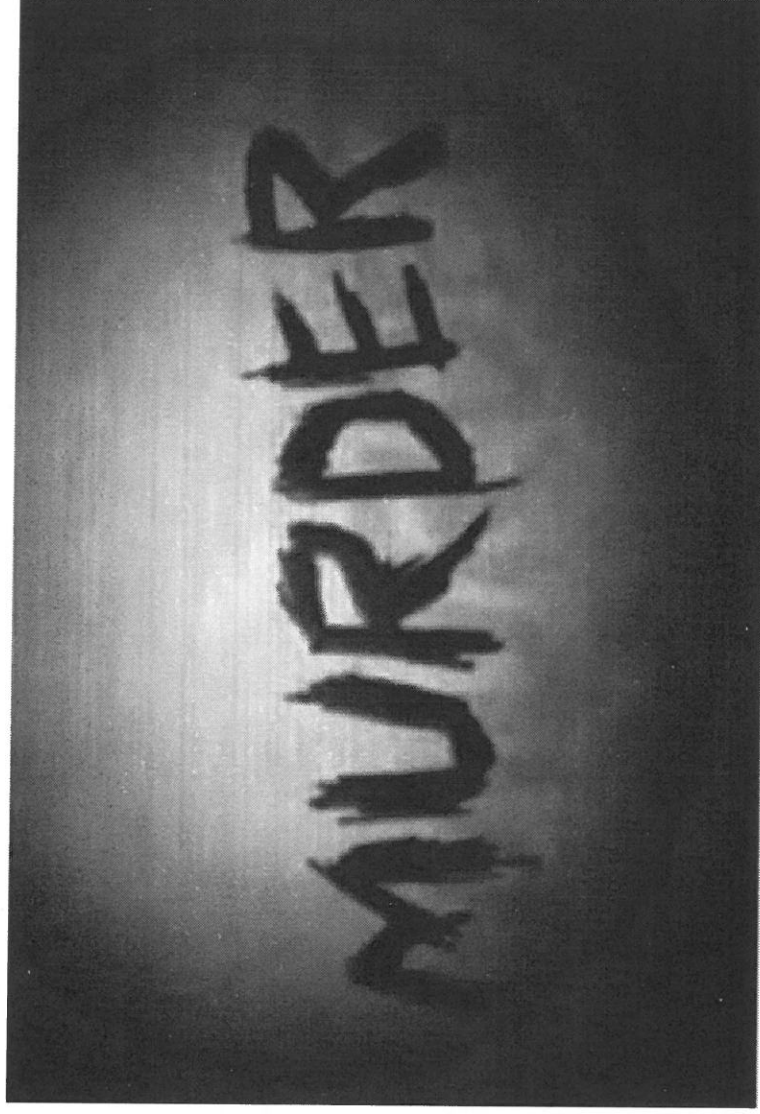
The desert survival problem

Compare the two results. The lower figure represents the greater chance of survival.

Which seems to have been more effective – individual or group decision?

ITEMS	Individual Ranking	Group Consensus Ranking	Official Ranking	Individual Difference Score	Group Difference Score
Torch (4 battery size)					
Jack knife					
Sectional air map of crash area					
Plastic rain coat (large size)					
Magnetic compass					
Bandage kit with gauze					
45 Calibre Pistol (loaded)					
Parachute (red and white)					
Bottle of salt tablets (1,000)					
1 litre of water per person					
Book entitled <i>Edible Animals of the Desert</i>					
2 pairs of sunglasses per person					
2 quarts of 180 proof Vodka					
1 overcoat per person					
Cosmetic mirror					
Total					

Murder Mystery



A group of students from your school has decided to go on holiday after finishing their final exams. They decide to go to Malta, a top Mediterranean destination, and rent a converted farmhouse with a pool. As a group, this works out quite cheaply as the farmhouse sleeps 8.

The farmhouse is in the countryside, and about 600m from a little beach which is quite secluded. The students have already been there to swim and have only found one or two

locals there. The nearest village is 1.5 Km away.

The group consists of 4 boys and 4 girls:

Sean, Chris, Tim and Luke, and Petra, Megan, Lindsay & Sandra on the girls' side.

So far they have been enjoying the sun and sea, sometimes going out on their own or in pairs or groups, sometimes going off for a swim, other times walking into the village to buy food and drink, or to catch a bus to see some sights. They are not often together as a group except for breakfast and dinner.

On the fourth evening, when they prepare to cook something for dinner at 6.30pm, Chris and Megan are missing. The others start to prepare the food.

All of a sudden, a white-faced Chris bursts in to say that Megan is dead. He went to the beach to have an evening swim and found her there – killed by a blow to the head with a rock.

In your teams, pick up the cards one by one, starting from No 1, and discuss each piece of information you get to see whether you can find out who murdered Megan.

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1. Chris had just started to date Megan.

2. Tim says that Megan left for the beach at around 5.30pm. Before that, she was reading a book.

3. Luke says he saw Megan on the beach as he was walking along the coastline. This was around 6pm, because he later looked at his watch to see whether they should return to prepare supper.

4. Sandra & Lindsay were together until 5.45pm, after which they split up.

5. Sean and Chris say that they were individually walking in the countryside in the afternoon. No-one was with them.

6. Megan had previously dated both Luke and Sean, and it was she who had broken off with them.

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7. Petra was with Luke most of the afternoon, except when they were swimming on the rocks out of sight of the beach. She was snorkelling for about an hour before they returned to the farmhouse.

8. Megan was a bright student and in the running for the top award for science that year.

9. Lindsay saw Petra snorkelling as she walked along the cliff on her way back to the farmhouse after leaving Sandra.

10. Chris had also dated Lindsay and Sandra before hooking up with Megan.

11. Tim has been applying to universities, but they only take top students. So far, only Megan got better grades than he did.

12. Petra overheard an argument between Chris and Megan the night before.
It sounded quite bad.

13. Sean had often made it clear that he would like to resume his relationship
with Megan, but she ignored him.

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14. Luke had told Chris certain things about Megan that had shocked Chris.

15. Sandra was also overheard arguing with Chris. She was crying.

16. Chris left the farmhouse when Megan did and bought some groceries from the village, for dinner. He left them at the farmhouse, where he didn't see anyone, and then went to the beach.

17. Tim was already at the farmhouse when Sean returned just after 6. Sandra arrived at the farmhouse just when they were about to start preparing dinner.

18. Lindsay joined Luke on rocks and they waited for Petra. They sat there till around 6.15pm.

19. Chris phoned Sean from the telephone at the local shop just after Sean arrived to ask whether they needed anything from the shops. He had forgotten his mobile at the farmhouse.

20. Sandra was still in love with Chris.

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