

The Deadly Picnic A Lab on Deductive Reasoning

Objective

You will use deductive reasoning to decide who committed the murder.

Background Information

Centerville police discovered the body of a 36-year-old white male (later identified as Gaven Brooks) in an open field of daisies about five miles outside of town. Mr. Brooks' body was discovered at 10:02 PM Friday night, October 11. He was found lying face up on a yellow queen-size sheet. According to autopsy reports, one fatal gunshot to the back of the head ended Mr. Brooks's life. The pathologist estimates that death occurred at about 7:45 PM.

As investigators scanned the crime scene, they made the following notes:

- Paper plates filled with partially eaten fried chicken, potato salad, and chocolate cake were located near Mr. Brooks's body.
- An open bottle of red wine and two partially-filled glasses of wine were found next to the yellow sheet.
- One of the wine glasses had a smudge of red lipstick on the rim.
- A recently smoked cigarette butt was found near the sheet.
- Footprints from the road to the field were those of a male, size 10, and a female, size 5. The only footprints from the field back to the road were those of a female, size 5.
- Car tracks of the same wheel base and tread pattern as Mr. Brooks' automobile were found at the road. The car was not found at the scene.
- Later that evening, Mr. Brooks's car was found abandoned in an empty parking lot in downtown Centerville.

Investigators believe that a female friend of Mr. Brooks was responsible for his demise. After questioning family and friends, it was discovered that the deceased had frequent social outings with six women who live in or near Centerville. The women's names are Rita, Lauren, Gail, Janice, Elaine, and Peggy.

Procedure

1. After reading the background information, record some important pieces of information in Data Table 1.
2. Read the special notes that the police gathered during their investigation. Record this information in Data Table 2.

Post Lab Questions

1. Who do you believe killed Mr. Brooks? _____

2. Justify your identification by citing specific evidential information. _____

3. Demonstrate the innocence of the other five women by citing key pieces of exonerating information.

4. Develop a short, but detailed, account of what you believe happened on the night of the murder. Include the following information:

- how the couple got to the murder site
- why they went there
- what happened while they were there
- how the murderer escaped
- her motive

DATA TABLE 1

<p>Description of location where body was found</p>	
<p>Approximate time and day of death</p>	
<p>Weapon used to inflict fatal wound</p>	
<p>Description of any footprints, tire prints, lip prints, etc., around the crime scene.</p>	
<p>Description of objects found at or around the crime scene</p>	
<p>Any other pieces of evidence that may help solve this crime</p>	

Investigators' Notes:

- Janice works full time as a cosmetologist.
- Elaine and Gail are schoolteachers.
- Rita's babysitter says Rita arrived home in her own car at about 5 p.m.
- Peggy and Elaine live together in a two-bedroom apartment in downtown Centerville.
- Gail lives in a nearby town called Jordan.
- Lauren is allergic to all species of flowering plants.
- Elaine and Janice are very petite women – they wear size 4 blue jeans.
- Gail and Janice are non-smokers.
- Rita's father owns a gun shop.
- Janice and Elaine have never met.
- Rita doesn't wear lipstick.
- Janice works part-time as an aerobics instructor at a health club in Centerville. She teaches a 7:30pm step aerobics class each Friday night and has not missed a class in two years.
- Rita lives in a country house about three miles to the west of Centerville.
- Gail attends the aerobics class that Janice teaches. She has not missed a Friday night class in nine months.
- Peggy is deathly allergic to grapes.
- Lauren works at a chemical supply house.
- Rita is a florist.
- Janice and Gail hate the color yellow.
- Lauren played center for semi-professional basketball team five years ago. She has red hair and is six feet, one inch tall.

DATA TABLE 2

Woman	Comments on Size of Women	Occupation and Hobbies	City or Place She Lives	Medical Information	Miscellaneous Information
Rita					
Lauren					
Gail					
Janice					
Peggy					
Elaine					

Answer Key

Answers to Postlab Questions

1. Elaine

2. Answers will vary but may include: Rita: never wears lipstick; lives in the country Lauren: has large feet; allergic to daisies Gail hates yellow at aerobics on Friday, nonsmoker Janice teaches aerobics on Friday night, hates yellow, nonsmoker Peggy: allergic to grapes; never wears lipstick

3. Lives downtown; has small feet

4. Stories will vary See example below: Elaine and Mr. Brooks had a date for a picnic on Friday night. Elaine volunteered to bring the sheet for the picnic if Mr. Brooks provided the food and wine. He picked up Elaine at about 6:00 PM. They went to the picnic area out in the country. Elaine was jealous of Mr. Brooks's relationship with her roommate. She took a gun to the picnic for revenge. Elaine and Mr. Brooks walked down to the field of daisies and spread out their sheet for the food. They got everything out and began eating and drinking. Elaine took out the gun and shot Mr. Brooks in the head. She ran back up to the road where they left his car. She drove herself back to town and abandoned his car in a parking lot that was vacant. From here she walked a few blocks to her apartment