

THE CASE OF THE MISSING COMPUTER CHIP

(IT'S PLUM CRAZY TO STEAL FROM US)

INTRODUCTION

It's the morning of July 5 in the northern California city of Cupertino. You are working the burglary watch, day shift. As commander of the electronic theft division you have a team of experts, skilled in the collection of all types of evidence relating to theft of computers and electronic stuff. At 9:50 a.m. you get a call that someone has attempted to steal an advanced chip from the Plum Computer Company. You and your team respond immediately to the call. When you arrive, you find that the plant is sealed off and all the uniformed employees in the plant have been confined to a single room, the lounge. Within the hour, the missing chip is found in an envelope in a pile of mail. The envelope was addressed to Gordon Lidy, the security chief of a rival computer firm. A cassette tape was also found in the envelope.

You assign one of your best officers, JoAnn Lane, to interview everyone present. Here is what she finds:

- A. Steve Randak, the president, arrived at 8:50 this a.m. to find the tone-operated security door to his private lab open and the prototype of his new computer chip missing. He immediately pushed the panic button that alerts security to close the gates. The guard at the gate reported that no person had left the plant since 8:00 a.m. today.
- B. A map of the crime scene
- C. Jo Ann begins accumulating clues, and as she does, tries to develop a hypothesis for how it was done, and who did it. She keeps her clues in an envelope.

INSTRUCTIONS for each team:

1. Read the Introduction (above)
2. Study the map of the crime scene (overpage)
3. After reading the above introduction and studying the map of the crime scene, your team should draw 5 (five) clues at random from the envelope.
4. Using the information at hand, try to solve the crime. You can organize the evidence in various ways, until your team develops a tentative hypothesis. Do not discourage minority opinions. Commit yourselves by writing down this hypothesis.
5. Once you have exhausted all your ideas with these clues, more evidence can be uncovered. Your team may now draw 3 (three) more clues from the envelope, at random. Repeat step 4.
6. After a few minutes, get together with another team or two...collaborate...compare clues, compare notes, compare ideas. See if you can reach a better hypothesis collaboratively.
7. Draw the last 3 clues, and continue as before until there is some general agreement, always allowing for minority opinions. Record your final team consensus...your hypothesis for what happened, and who was probably responsible. Be able to defend your hypothesis.
8. When all teams have pretty well arrived at some "final" hypothesis, you will be asked by your teacher to participate in a class-wide discussion in which you can share hypotheses and the rationales for arriving at those hypotheses. You will be asked to critique each other's hypotheses and reasoning. Hopefully, you may be able to arrive at a class-wide general consensus.
9. In any case, you will also be asked to analyze your activities in trying to solve this crime. What elements were at work which are also found in the process of SCIENCE?