



It's a Crime

A mystery is a story based on a puzzling crime. Usually a mystery involves an object's disappearance or a person's untimely death. The main character, the detective, must use common sense and intelligence to solve the crime. He or she will search for clues and evidence that will answer the question "Whodunit?" Clues can be items such as fingerprints or notes, or the witnessing of conversations or secret actions.

Some of the other characters in a mystery are suspects, people who may have committed the crime. Although at first it appears that any one of the suspects may have committed the crime, the detective eventually narrows the possibilities. Often the detective interviews suspects to learn who had the means, motive, and opportunity to commit the crime. He or she also seeks to learn alibis, suspects' locations at the time the crime was committed.

Suspense and red herrings are common elements of mysteries. A writer must capture the reader's attention and make him or her want to read on to learn the solution to the mystery. Dark and dreary settings can help add suspense to a mystery. Red herrings, false or misleading clues, are sometimes included to direct a reader's suspicions away from the criminal toward other characters in the story who have a weak alibi or a strong motive. Eventually, however, the detective rules out such people and zeros in on the criminal.

The solution to the mystery is revealed in the part of the story called the denouement. This takes place at the end of the story, after the detective has explored all possibilities. The guilty party is exposed and the story ends.

Write the letter of the correct description for each term on the left.

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| _____ 1. means | a. a puzzling crime that must be solved |
| _____ 2. detective | b. something that furnishes proof of a crime |
| _____ 3. suspense | c. someone who may have committed a crime |
| _____ 4. evidence | d. the ability to commit a crime |
| _____ 5. motive | e. proof of one's location at the time a crime is committed |
| _____ 6. red herring | f. anxiety or excitement about an outcome |
| _____ 7. mystery | g. the character who will solve a mystery |
| _____ 8. alibi | h. a reason to commit a crime |
| _____ 9. suspect | i. a false clue |
| _____ 10. denouement | j. the resolution of a mystery |