

## ***Problem Solving Activity: Untrue Confessions***

***Introduction:*** A frightful homicide has been committed at the Peaceful Hills Asylum for Unbelievably unbalanced Persons. This very progressive hospital treats people with the most exotic mental illnesses known to science. It has the world's only ward set aside for patients who think they are power drills and a meadow reserved for one woman who imagines herself to be a 15<sup>th</sup> century cathedral.

The hospital's leading therapist, Dr. Fred Shrynker, has been found murdered in his room on the second floor of a cottage restricted to Shrynker and the patients under his care. It is known that the murder was committed by one of his patients ---- which simplifies matters a little. However, the special ward that Shrynker headed is the Ward for Patients Suffering from the Delusion That They Are Murderers. This complicates things a little.

***Task:*** You and the members of your investigative team are assigned to solve the crime at the Peaceful Hills Asylum. You are all well trained in the scientific method and have a sharp eye for clues. You can solve this murder by studying the attached drawing which shows the crime scene just minutes after the crime was committed and comparing it with the 8 confessions on the following page. By careful analysis, you should see that 7 of the 8 confessions do not work,, based on details from the drawing. The eighth confessions will reveal the murderer. Follow the steps below to complete your investigation.

### ***Objective:***

- To use the steps in scientific problem solving to solve a hypothetical murder.

### ***Procedure:***

1. Read the Introduction carefully.
  - In question form, write the problem that you are faced with in this activity in the box entitled: **Problem Stated**.
  - As a group, decide on the important information in the drawing and list them in the **Observations** section of your worksheet.  
\*\*\*NOTE: Each person in the group should complete his or her worksheet for grading at the end of the activity.
2. Study and discuss the picture of the crime scene.
  - As a group, list all the important information in the **Observations** section of the worksheet. Pay special attention to thing like time of day, season of the year, date, etc.

3. As a group, make an educated guess about who or what committed the crime based on the information you compiled in #1 and #2 above.
  - Write this information in the Hypothesis section.
  
4. Read the confessions of the eight patients. As a group:
  - Write down anything important in the confessions of each patient in the Data Analysis subsection of the worksheet with the correct name on it.
  - Evaluate each piece of information. If it does not agree with the data in the Observations section, circle it.
  
5. As a group, discuss all the information and try to decide who the killer is.
  - Write your decision in the Conclusions section.
  - Select one member of your group to present your finding to the class

# UNTRUE CONFESSIONS WORKSHEET

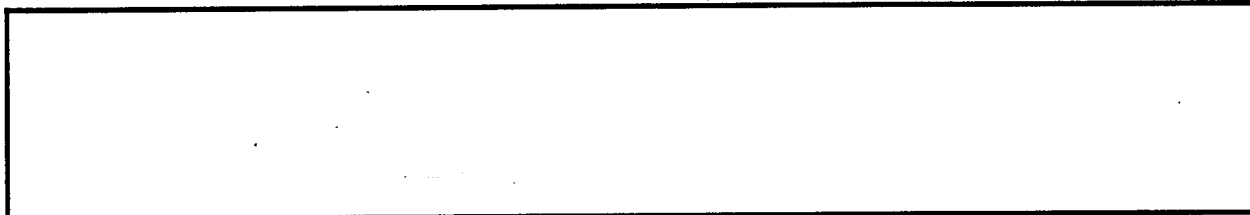
## I. Problem Stated:

## II. Observations:

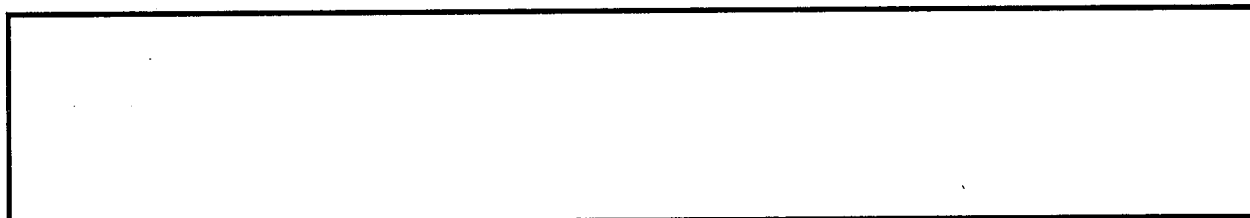
## III. Hypothesis:

#### IV. Data Analysis

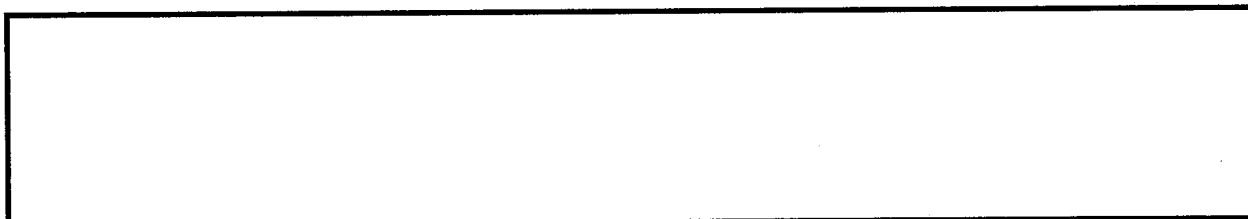
Louise Bonkers



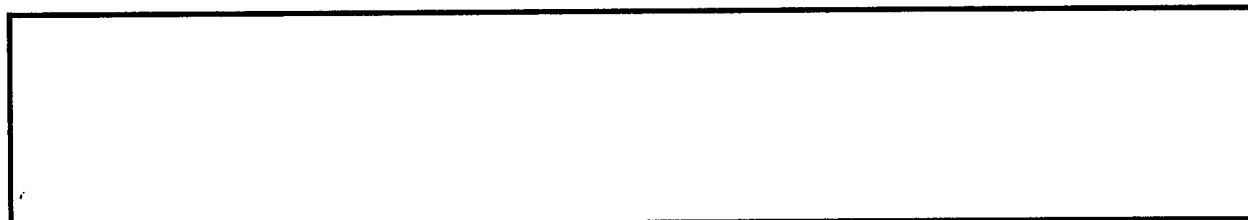
Gerald McNutt



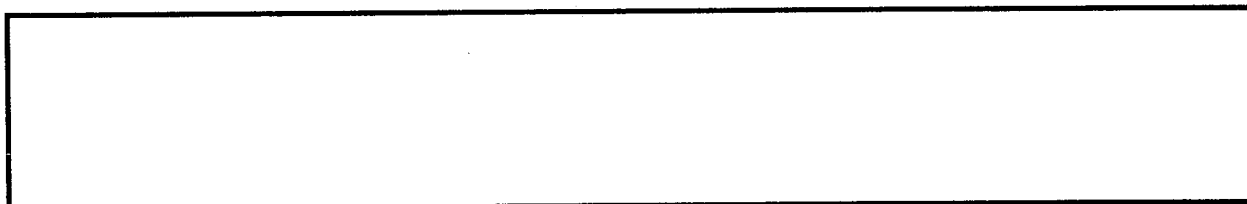
Dotty Noodleton



Leopold Looney



Griselda Cracklin



#### IV. Data Analysis

Corker Mayhem

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Mabel Fogpate

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Cootie Bananaman

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#### V. Conclusion

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## PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET



### Louise Bonkers:

"I had to kill Dr. Shrynker. First, he was a Yankees fan. Second, it was the 15th of November. Third, I had a toothache. So what I did was drop by his office on the pretext of borrowing some records, and then grab the phone from the desk and strangle him with the telephone cord. I guess

that'll teach him to root for Dave Winfield! I still have a toothache, though."



### Gerald McNutt:

"Yes. I assassinated President Shrynker. Did you know he was planning peace talks with the Soviets? I knew that to keep our country strong I must act swiftly, so I confronted him in his study. There he was calmly sipping brandy, as if our national defenses were not on the verge of total

collapse! He had just raised the cup to his traitorous lips when I snatched one of his bowling trophies from the wall and brought it down on his head. It was civic duty, pure and simple."



### Dotty Noodleton:

"Dr. Shrynker has always loved me with a passionate, all-consuming desire. Tonight we were to elope together! I leaned a ladder against the building and climbed to his room. But when I stepped into the study and saw him reading a letter from his wife, I knew he had betrayed me! I

struck him with a large heart-shaped ashtray beside his chair, then quickly left the way I had come. It was an act of passion, like all my acts toward him!"



### Mabel Fogpate:

"We must not leave things undone. So many holes must be filled, so many loose ends must be tied! I told Dr. Shrynker just tonight that his typewriter was uncovered, but he ignored me. Then I saw that his shoelace was untied. That, of course, cannot be tolerated. He bent to tie it, when I

noticed that his entire bookshelf was out of alphabetical order! I struck him with a golf club to put a stop to his insufferable oversights, and he died. At least that's all done with!"



### Leopold Looney:

"Now that our invasion is under way, it is safe to confess that I am not the Earthling I seem to be. I have mingled among you people for years, planning the takeover of your puny planet. Dr. Shrynker knew this but could not prove it. Tonight he caught me in this office telepathically beaming signals

into space through the window. He tried to jam my transmission by blowing on the harmonica he keeps next to his chair, but in two steps I'd grabbed the globe-shaped paperweight from the desk and killed him. It doesn't matter what you do to me now. Our ships will arrive very soon."



### Griselda Cracklin:

"Shrynker's name has eight letters in it, did you know that? I was 56 eight days ago. And there are eight panes in the window of Shrynker's office. Eight times eight is 64, minus eight is 56, you see? So I took eight steps around Shrynker's chair, then strangled him from behind four times with

my scarf. I burned the scarf in the fireplace, which took three minutes. That meant I had to drink five glasses of brandy and spin the globe in the corner three times. This is my 47th murder, so I need one more."



### Corker Mayhem:

"Frankly, Shrynker was one of my least promising patients, practically a hopeless case. I decided to resort to my most extreme therapy, which I call 'Mayhem's Sudden Surprise Method.' I went to Shrynker's office before he got there, hid behind the door when he came in, waited until he was

comfortably seated, then tiptoed over and, for a surprise, suffocated him with a cushion. I believe this technique will effectively terminate any future behavior on his part."



### Cootie Bananaman:

"I know Dr. Shrynker was jealous of me because of my cloak of invisibility. It is my special gift, bestowed upon me by the Immortal Being, and no one can take it from me. I had the cloak on when I entered his office, so I didn't worry about him seeing me. But as I stepped in, I made a floor-

board creak, and the doctor looked up abruptly in alarm. To get the job over with quickly, I just throttled him with my invisible fingers. Ha ha! Now my cloak is safe forever!"

DRAWING OF THE SHRYNKER MURDER CRIME SCENE

