



FBI Agent: Artifacts from Mesopotamia

Adventure Description:

In this adventure, you will think like an FBI agent and investigate the robbery of a collection of artifacts from ancient Mesopotamia and determine who committed the crime.

Activity

Step 1: Background Information on Mesopotamia and FBI Agents (5 minutes)

- Show [Video: Artifacts from Mesopotamia](#).
- Discuss how some FBI agents are in charge of investigating stolen ancient artifacts.
- Discuss why there is a specific division of the FBI that investigates stolen art and artifacts. Discuss how artifacts and art can provide evidence about how ancient civilizations operated in the past. By analyzing artifacts and art, historians and other scholars can make claims about how people lived and what ancient civilizations were like.

Step 2: Background Information on Activity (5-8 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will be FBI agents and will investigate the robbery of a collection of artifacts from ancient Mesopotamia. Show [Handout: Information on Stolen Artifacts](#).
- As a class, read about the stolen artifacts. Discuss what each artifact suggests about life in Mesopotamia. Here are some examples:
 - The banquet plaque shows that there was a social hierarchy, as there were images of people being served by servants during an event or celebration. It also shows us that there were important buildings that needed to be locked.
 - The set of weights shows that Mesopotamians had a way of measuring items. It also shows us how merchants and customers bought and sold goods.
 - The clay envelope and document show that there was a writing system in Mesopotamia. They also show that there was a legal system with a judge to decide on the verdict.
- Explain to students that 3 students will be chosen to be suspects who stole the artifacts. The rest of the students will be FBI agents who are going to first examine evidence from the crime scene and then interview the three suspects. Afterwards, the FBI agents will deliberate and determine who they think committed the crime.
- Provide 3 students with a card from [Handout: Cards for Suspects](#). The card will tell them whether he or she is guilty or not of a crime. Teacher note: Students who have suspect cards must be careful not to reveal if they are guilty of the crime. This is very important to emphasize!

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Step 3: Looking at Evidence from Crime Scene (5-10 minutes)

- Explain to suspects that they will now review their cards. They should carefully read through the cards because they will be interviewed.
- While they are reviewing their cards, the FBI agents will be in charge of looking at evidence from the crime scene and reading notes from police.
- FBI agents should be divided into pairs. Provide pairs with [Handout: Looking at Evidence](#). Explain to pairs that they will look at the evidence and read through police notes.

Step 4: Discussion in Pairs About Evidence (5-10 minutes)

- Explain to pairs that they will now discuss what information they still need to be able to confidently decide who committed the crime. They will come up with a list of questions to ask the 3 suspects in the next step. For example, they can ask suspects what blood type they have to determine if the blood type matches what was found at the crime scene.
- Provide each pair with a sticky note to write their questions on.

Step 5: Interviewing Suspects (5-10 minutes)

- Set up [Handout: Signs for Suspects](#) on a table at the front of the room. Have the 3 suspects come to the front of the room and sit by the correct sign based on what number is on their card. Suspects should take their cards with them to the front of the room so they can reference them if they don't know the answer to a question that is asked.
- Have each suspect introduce him or herself and state a few sentences saying why they are innocent.
- Remind students that they should be taking notes while suspects are speaking.
- Then, have pairs take turns asking suspects questions. Other pairs should carefully listen so they can write down notes about what they learn.
- Because pairs only have 5-8 minutes to ask questions, they should make sure that their questions are clear and related to the information needed to solve the crime.
- Example questions include:
 - What blood type do you have?
 - What do you know about ancient Mesopotamia?
 - Why do you think the museum has a Mesopotamia exhibit?
 - Where were you during the robbery?
 - Do you have a key to the chest where the artifacts were kept at the museum?

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- Do you know how much the banquet plaque, merchant weights, or clay envelope are worth?
- Why do you think someone would want to steal the artifacts?

Step 6: Deliberation and Reveal (5 minutes)

- After the interviews are over, create a list on the board of pairs' final decisions of who is guilty.
- Have the guilty suspect reveal him or herself.
- Show [Handout: Information on Who Committed The Crime](#). Review why this suspect is guilty.
- Discuss whether FBI agents correctly guessed who the guilty suspect was. What evidence steered FBI agents in the correct or incorrect direction when determining who was guilty?
- Next, discuss how artifacts help us learn about life in Mesopotamia. What would happen if the artifacts were never recovered? What if these artifacts weren't found in the first place?

Materials List

Provided online:

- Video: Artifacts From Mesopotamia
- Handout: Information on Stolen Artifacts
- Handout: Cards for Suspects
- Handout: Looking at Evidence
- Handout: Signs for Suspects
- Handout: Information on Who Committed The Crime

Not provided:

- No additional materials are needed

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