

## **Student Investigation Letter**

Hello Investigator,

Today, we are embarking on an exciting and challenging mystery-solving activity inspired by the Hunt A Killer board games. The setting of our mystery is the Institute for Nuclear Semiotics (INS). This research facility is dedicated to creating signs and documentation to convey information about hazardous nuclear materials to future generations, ensuring safety and comprehension across language and cultural barriers.

The main character in our story, Dr. Evelyn Harper, a leading expert in nuclear semiotics, has been murdered. This incident coincides with a critical project milestone related to a new signage system and a mysterious hooded figure caught on security footage. Your task, as investigators, is to determine what happened to Dr. Harper and uncover any underlying issues within the project.

You will start by forming groups of four and analyzing the initial set of documents, which includes meeting minutes, a project plan, and a white paper. These documents will provide the background and context needed to begin your investigation.

As you progress through the sessions, you will receive additional documents such as user manuals, technological specifications, data sets, emails, security incident reports, access logs, and a security camera still image. Pay close attention to the details, as some documents contain critical clues while others may serve as red herrings designed to mislead you.

Remember, communication and collaboration within your group are key. Share your findings, discuss your theories, and piece together the puzzle. By the end of this activity, you will not only have solved the mystery but also gained valuable experience in exploring, analyzing, and synthesizing technical documents.

Happy Investigating!

## **Deliverables Breakdown**

You will submit two deliverables for this project: a solution to the mystery that answers our major questions and an informative reflection.

## **The Solution**

- For this portion of the project, all I need from you is a paragraph answer for each of the big questions. You will be graded only partially on how accurate your deduction is, but mostly on how well you support your answers with evidence and reasoning.
- Please answer the following questions:

[This file is supplemental material to Justin Cook, *A Murder Most Technical: Gamification, AI, and Rhetorical Genre Studies in the Technical Writing Classroom*, prompt 10.1 (2026), doi: 10.31719/pjaw.v10i1.232]

- Who killed Dr. Harper? What evidence do you have that leads you to believe that?
- Don't forget to establish motive, means, and opportunity.
- What went wrong with the project? What evidence do you have that leads you to believe that?
- Who is the mysterious hooded figure? What evidence do you have that leads you to believe that?

### **The Reflection**

- Your job here is to reflect deeply on this game's impact on your learning. This is where most of your grade for this project will come from. Please answer all of the questions listed below. Stellar reflections do so by uniting answers under a common umbrella point instead of simply answering them in a row as they are listed.
- Please answer the following questions:
  - How did this game reinforce what you already knew about technical documents/writing before entering the course?
  - How did this game challenge your previous understanding of technical documents/writing?
  - What documents did you find most enjoyable to analyze? Why?
  - What documents did you find most challenging to analyze? Why?
  - What was your process for identifying critical clues and distinguishing them from the red herrings?
  - How did this mystery game enhance your understanding of the role of technical writing in real-world contexts? You may discuss high-stakes situations like nuclear safety, but you can also think about more everyday applications of technical writing.
- Return to one of the documents in the packet and explain how it specifically meets the definition of technical writing we have been working on. Use the chart below as a point of comparison.

### **Conventions of Technical Writing Chart**

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**TABLE 1.1.2 Conventions of technical writing**

| Criteria                 | Technical Writing  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Purpose</b>           | To communicate technical and specialized information in a clear, accessible, usable manner to people who need to use it to make decisions, perform processes, or support company goals.                                |
| <b>Audience</b>          | Varied, but can include fellow employees such as subordinates, colleagues, managers, and executives, as well as clients and other stakeholders, the general public, and even readers within the legal system.          |
| <b>Writing Style</b>     | Concise, clear, plain, and direct language; may include specialized terminology; typically uses short sentences and paragraphs; uses active voice; makes purpose immediately clear.                                    |
| <b>Tone</b>              | Business/professional in tone, which falls between formal and informal; may use first person or second person if appropriate; courteous and constructive.  |
| <b>Structure</b>         | Highly structured; short paragraphs; clear transitions and structural cues (headings and sub-headings) to move the reader directly and logically through the document.   |
| <b>Format/Formatting</b> | Can be in electronic, visual, or printed formats; may be long (reports) or short (emails, letters, memos); often uses style guides to describe required formatting features; uses headings, lists, figures and tables. |
| <b>Other Features</b>    | Typically objective and neutral; ideas are evidence-based and data-driven; descriptors are precise and quantitative whenever possible.   |

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