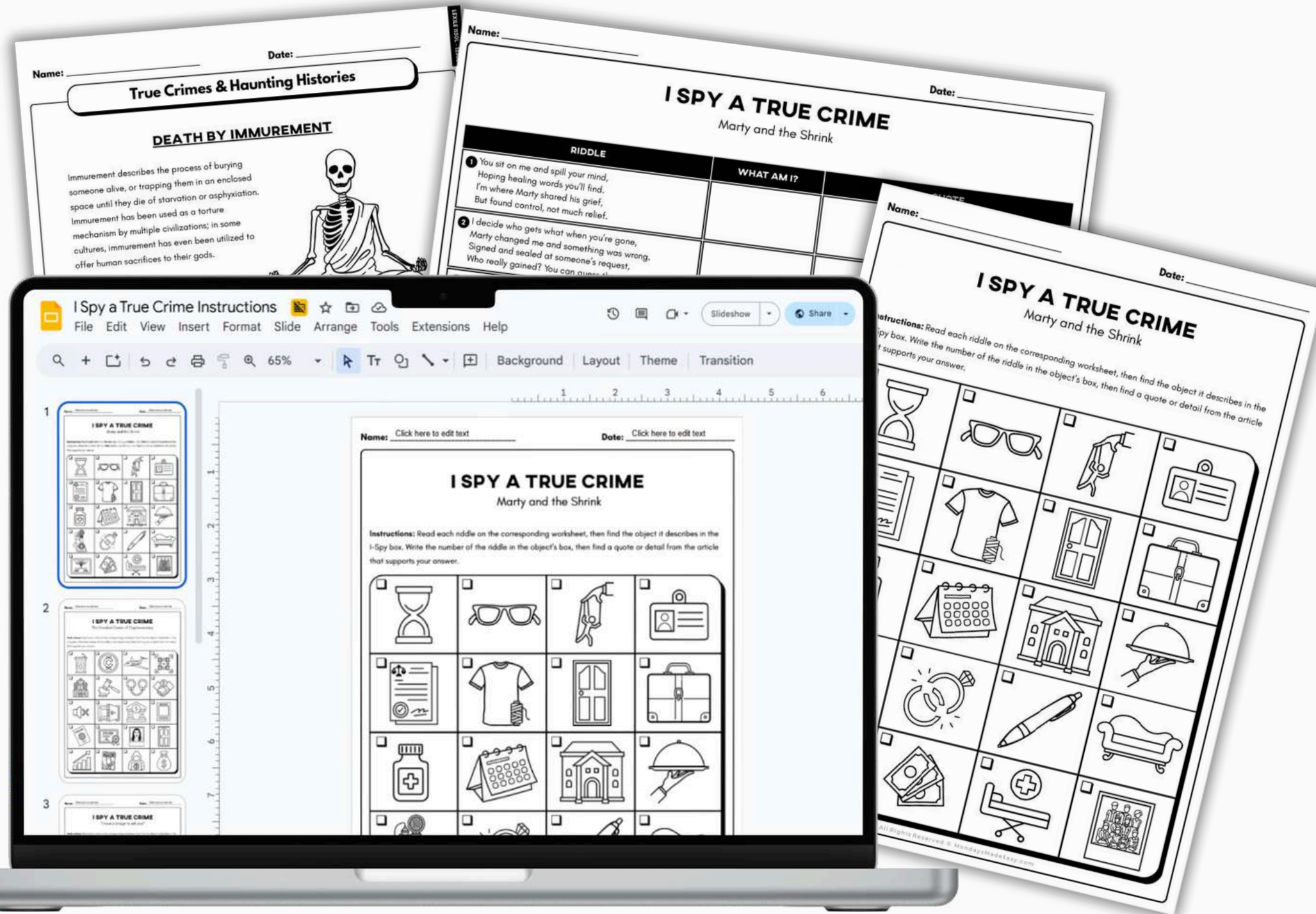


True Crime Riddle Activities

Students will read five nonfiction articles and decode word-based riddles linked to each story!



- **Strengthen students' inference skills** by pairing five engaging true crime nonfiction passages with clue-based riddles for practice.
- **Promote close reading and text evidence gathering** as learners decode riddle-style questions directly tied to each story.
- **Save planning time with ready-to-use resources** including detailed answer keys and clear teacher instructions for classroom implementation.

Practice inference and decode word puzzles!

PURCHASE HERE

Included with this resource:



5 True Crime **Nonfiction Articles**

- Explore real stories about “The Crooked Queen of Crypto,” “The Lover in the Attic,” “Death by Immurement,” and more!
- Lexile levels range between 950L - 1250L



“I Spy a True Crime” **Riddle Worksheets**

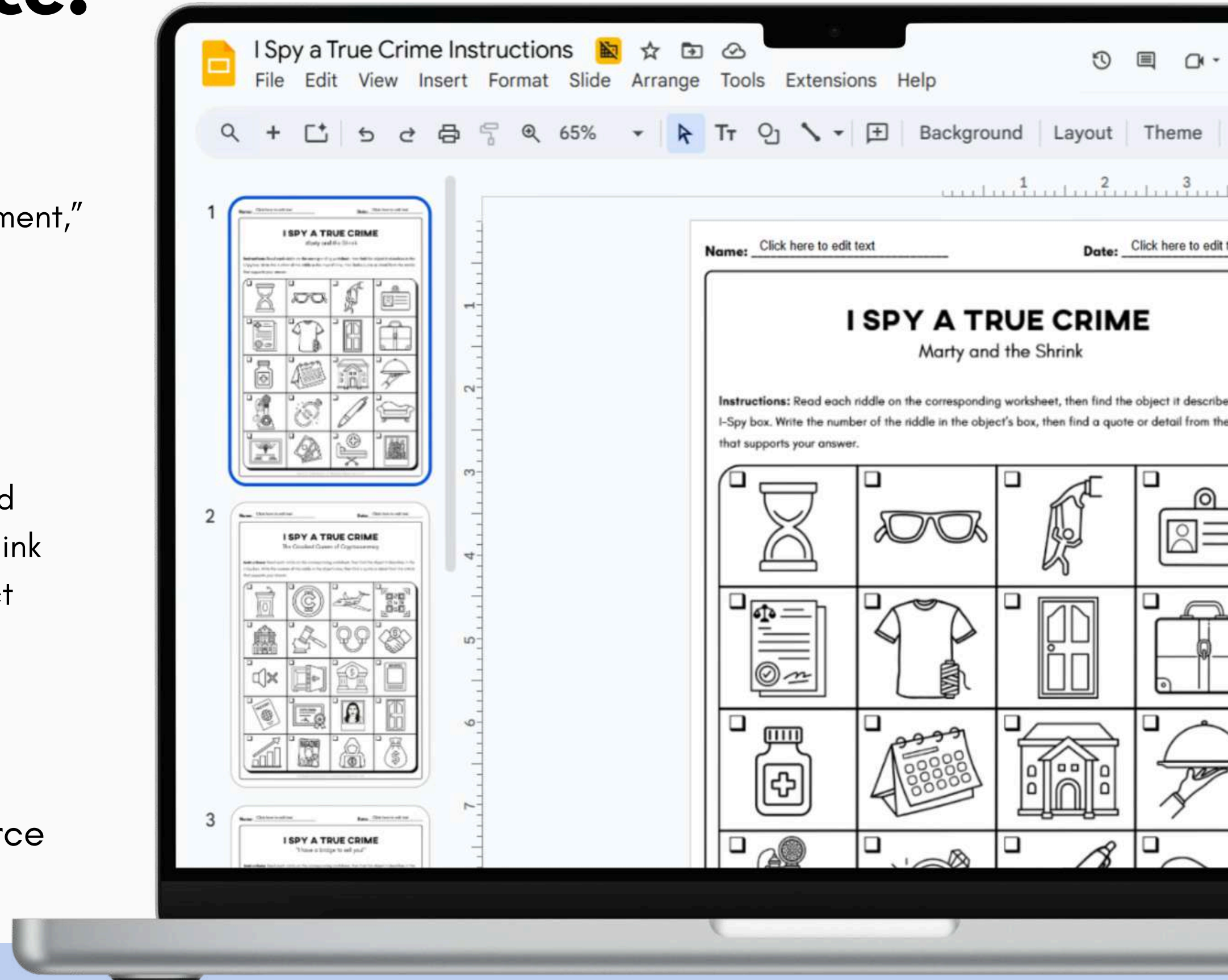
- Includes 10 word puzzles per article
- Strengthens analytical reading, supports text-based evidence gathering, and encourages students to think like detectives by using indirect clues to draw direct conclusions



Detailed **Answer Keys**



Teacher Instructions for how to use this resource



Includes Digital Version for Google Drive®

True Crime Riddle Activities


Challenge students to practice inference skills with this true crime reading comprehension activity!

Name: _____ Date: _____

True Crimes & Haunting Histories

DEATH BY IMMUREMENT

Immurement describes the process of burying someone alive, or trapping them in an enclosed space until they die of starvation or asphyxiation. Immurement has been used as a torture mechanism by multiple civilizations; in some cultures, immurement has even been utilized to offer human sacrifices to their gods.



In Japan, some Buddhist monks voluntarily experience immurement as a part of a religious practice. This practice involves self-mummification with the goal to transcend the body to a state of meditative trance called *nyujo*. Entering this meditative state is thought to empower the monk to return to the world and aid in the healing of humanity. This state establishes the monk as a *sokushinbutsu*.

In order to preserve the body, the monks would go through a process called *nyujo*. This process involved eating a very limited diet of nuts, seeds, roots, bark, and other natural items. After a thousand days of starvation, the monk would fast and be ready to be buried alive.

The burial process would place the monk ten feet underground with no airway to help the monk breathe. The monk would ring a bell to signify that he was ready to be buried. He would remain in a deep state of meditation until he died. At this point, the airway was removed and the monk was properly buried.

In order to be declared a *sokushinbutsu*, the monk's body would have to be preserved. If the monk did not show signs of decay after 1000 days, he was deemed a *sokushinbutsu* and enshrined. In 1879, the Japanese government declared assisted suicide illegal.

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Name: _____ Date: _____

I SPY A TRUE CRIME

Death by Immurement

RIDDLE	WHAT AM I?	QUOTE
1 I echo deep beneath the ground, A final life in metal sound. When ringing stops, the breath is gone, And silence means I carry on.		
2 A hollow stick above the clay, To help the monk breathe night and day. But once he stops and breath is done, I'm pulled out, and the end has come.		
3 I hold no feast, just bitter brew, To cleanse the flesh and thoughts anew. I'm part of fasting's quiet grace, Before the monk leaves time and space.		
4 I count the days with grain and glass, As time and hunger slowly pass. A thousand days, then water fast, The monk prepares to breathe his last.		
5 Crossed legs, closed eyes, no word, no sound, In sacred stillness I am found. I sit for days in quiet grace, Preparing for my resting place.		

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Name: _____ Date: _____

I SPY A TRUE CRIME

Death by Immurement

Instructions: Read each riddle on the corresponding worksheet, then find the object it describes in the I-Spy box. Write the number of the riddle in the object's box, then find a quote or detail from the article that supports your answer.



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Explore Five True Crime Reading Passages


Explore "The Crooked Queen of Crypto," "The Lover in the Attic," "Marty and the Shrink," and more!

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

True Crimes & Haunting Histories

MARTY AND THE SHRINK

Marty Markowitz was a wealthy man, but in 1961, he faced a challenging period in his life. He had lost both of his parents within a 6-month span, and his fiancée had also broken off their engagement. To top it off, he inherited the responsibility of managing his parents' large textile company. It was during this time that he became a patient of Dr. Herschkopf, a charming young therapist with an impressive roster of celebrity clientele.



Marty and Dr. Herschkopf began to see each other three times a week for therapy sessions. During these sessions, Dr. Herschkopf convinced Marty that his family was to blame for all of his problems, and encouraged him to distance himself from his remaining family members.

Over the next three decades, Dr. Herschkopf abused the patient-doctor relationship and coerced Marty into firing his sister from the family business, reorganizing his will, and paying him large sums of money for treatment. Dr. Herschkopf convinced Marty to turn away from his own family and accept Herschkopf's family as his new kin. This is likely how he managed to convince Marty to allow him to move into his lavish Hamptons mansion.

Dr. Herschkopf slowly tried to acquire everything Marty owned - even his home. He would host extravagant parties and lead his guests to believe it was his own mansion. While he cooked them food and cleaned up after them, many of Dr. Herschkopf's guests assumed Marty was the household helper.

In 2010, Marty was admitted to the hospital for an operation; when Dr. Herschkopf did not bother to pay him a visit, Marty began to question the merit of their friendship. It was at this point, nearly 50 years later, that Marty reconnected with his estranged sister and began to reclaim his life.


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Name: _____ **Date:** _____

True Crimes & Haunting Histories

"I HAVE A BRIDGE TO SELL YOU!"

In the 1880s, George C. Parker established a business in New York City, the "Golden Door" to New York; new to the city, he targeted immigrants for a better life, these immigrants were his candidates for his business.



George C. Parker owned the Brooklyn Bridge and worked as an employee in the city. He eventually gained the trust of the city and the bridge, which he sold to the city. When his new employees would ask about the sale of the bridge as an opportunity to make a fortune, they would believe that they could charge access to the bridge. Parker would negotiate to "sell" the bridge for whatever price they ranged from a couple hundred to tens of thousands of dollars. The new "owners" of the Brooklyn Bridge would try to get rid of the bridge from cars crossing the bridge. Any hopes of making money from the bridge, the police, who would stop their efforts and inform the city.

George C. Parker was not Parker's only claim of ownership. Parker also owned the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Statue of Liberty. He was arrested in 1908, but managed to escape his trial by fleeing the country. He was finally sentenced to life in prison in 1928, for a fraudulent check for \$150.


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Name: _____ **Date:** _____

True Crimes & Haunting Histories

THE CROOKED QUEEN OF CRYPTO

In 2014, Ruja Ignatova founded OneCoin, a cryptocurrency that had investors believing it was the next big thing. Unfortunately for these investors, OneCoin became known as one of the largest scams in all of history.



Ruja Ignatova is a graduate of the University of Oxford and earned her Ph.D from the University of Constance. She was a charismatic and promising business person, boasting work experience with reputable institutions and front-page features on magazines like *Forbes*.

In the beginning, OneCoin paid profitable returns to investors and shared impressive market reports. In reality, the business was actually a Ponzi scheme - a form of fraud in which investors profit from money coming into the business from new investors as opposed to the earnings of the business itself. While OneCoin was being marketed as one of the largest, most powerful cryptocurrencies and promising to revolutionize global finance, it was simultaneously worth less than a penny.

There were a number of contributing factors to the success of this scam. First off, OneCoin was a closed system. This meant that the company had control over the value of exchange within the OneCoin platform. In addition, the company also attempted to control OneCoin's public image by banning negative members and refusing to answer any questions that seemed to threaten the cryptocurrency's reputation.

Central banks and financial institutions began to question the validity of OneCoin; in 2017, shortly after widespread scrutiny, Ruja disappeared. Her brother was arrested and convicted in 2019, admitting to fraud. He claims to not know the whereabouts of Ruja. To date, OneCoin has scammed investors of several billions of dollars in investments.


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Name: _____ **Date:** _____

True Crimes & Haunting Histories

THE LOVER IN THE ATTIC

Dolly Gustavich (née Karschell) was born in 1880 in Austria. When she was 17, she moved to New York City where she met her future husband, Fred. They got married and she worked in a textile factory. When she was 17, she met Fred and they got married. She worked in a textile factory and they had a son, Otto. When she was 17, she met Fred and they got married. She worked in a textile factory and they had a son, Otto. When she was 17, she met Fred and they got married. She worked in a textile factory and they had a son, Otto.



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Name: _____ **Date:** _____

True Crimes & Haunting Histories

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In order to preserve the body, the monks would go through a process called *mokujikigyo*. This process involved eating a very limited diet of nuts, seeds, roots, bark, and tea in order to starve the body. After a thousand days of starvation, the monk would fast on water until he was ready to be buried alive.

The burial process would place the monk ten feet underground with nothing but a bamboo airway to help the monk breathe. The monk would ring a bell to signify that he was still alive. He would remain in a deep state of meditation until he died. At this point, the bamboo airway was removed and the monk was properly buried.

In order to be declared a *sokushinbutsu*, the monk's body would have to remain mummified. If the monk did not show signs of decay after 1000 days, he was deemed a *sokushinbutsu* and enshrined. In 1879, the Japanese government declared assisted suicide illegal.

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These nonfiction passages have a **Lexile level range of 950L-1250L**, making them perfect for older students!

Includes 10 Riddles Per Article

To solve each riddle, students must use inference skills and locate supporting text evidence

Strengthen analytical reading, support text-based analysis, and **encourage students to think like detectives!**







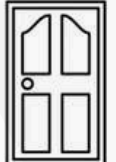













**ANSWER
KEY
INCLUDED!**

Name: _____ Date: _____

I SPY A TRUE CRIME

Marty and the Shrink

Instructions: Read each riddle on the corresponding worksheet, then find the object I-Spy box. Write the number of the riddle in the object's box, then find a quote or detail that supports your answer.

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Name: _____ Date: _____

I SPY A TRUE CRIME

Marty and the Shrink

RIDDLE	WHAT AM I?	QUOTE
1 You sit on me and spill your mind, Hoping healing words you'll find. I'm where Marty shared his grief, But found control, not much relief.		
2 I decide who gets what when you're gone, Marty changed me and something was wrong. Signed and sealed at someone's request, Who really gained? You can guess the rest.		
3 Big and fancy, by the shore, But who was living there for sure? He threw parties like it was his own, While the real owner was barely known.		
4 I'm served at parties, full of delight, But the hands that prepared me were While the guests cheered and glasses The real host was never linked.		
5 I held Marty when he was weak, But no friend came by to speak. Alone he lay, lost in thought, Till a spark of truth was finally caught.		

Name: _____ Date: _____

I SPY A TRUE CRIME

Marty and the Shrink

RIDDLE	WHAT AM I?	QUOTE
6 Once a promise, now undone, Left behind when love did run. Part of the sorrow that filled his past, I'm a symbol that didn't last.		
7 Marty's legacy, a business old, Passed down in threads and fabric bold. But even that was pulled apart, A web woven from the start.		
8 Hung with pride upon the wall, It says he's trained to help us all. But what if knowledge hides a scheme, And trust becomes a broken dream?		
9 Grain by grain, the time went by, Decades lost beneath the lie. You didn't see how slow it fell, Until you broke free from the spell.		
10 You don't see me, but I was there, Controlling choices everywhere. Marty moved, but not alone, Someone else set the tone.		

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