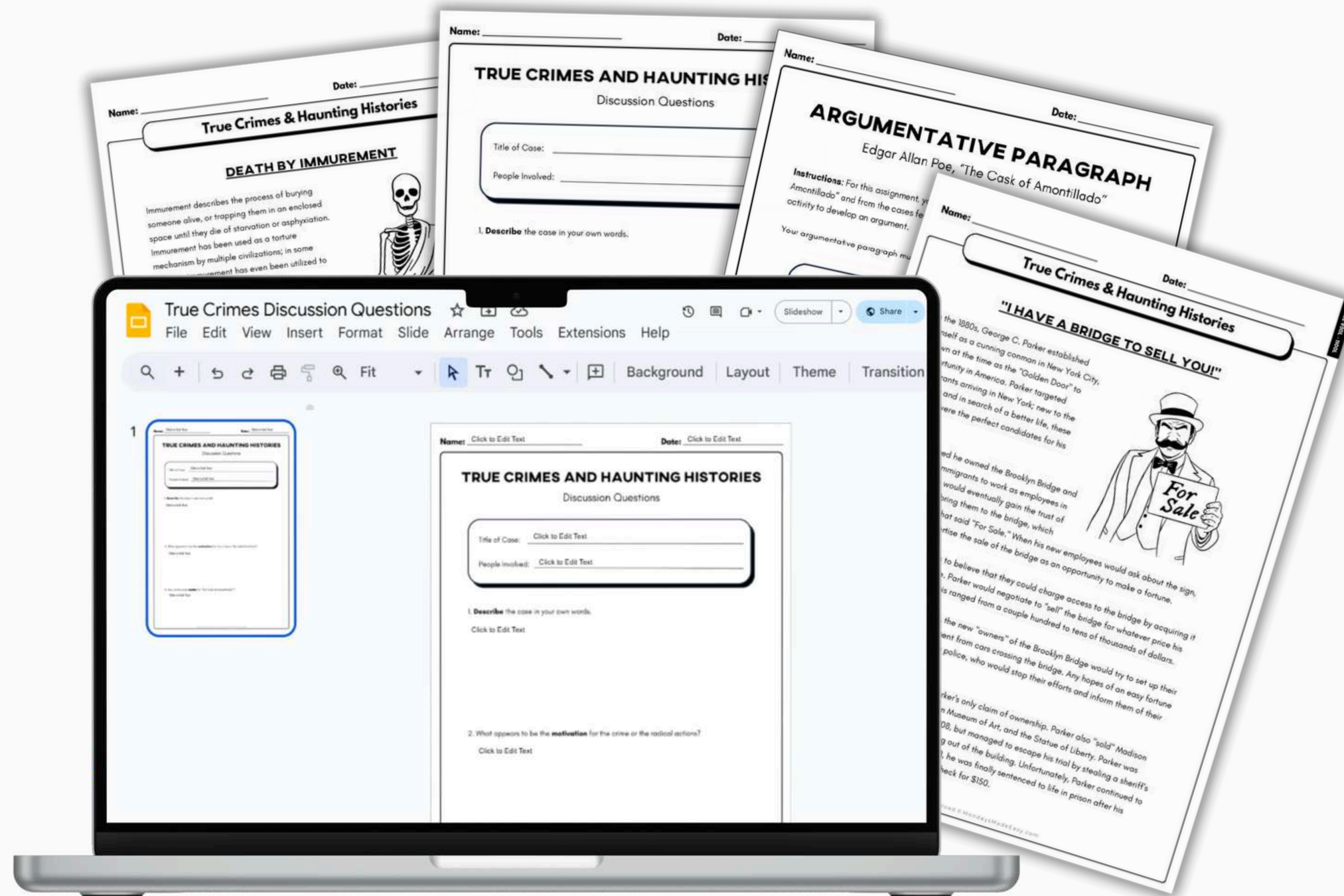


# True Crime Analysis Activity

Students will learn about five spooky nonfiction tales and write an argumentative paragraph examining common themes in crime and revenge



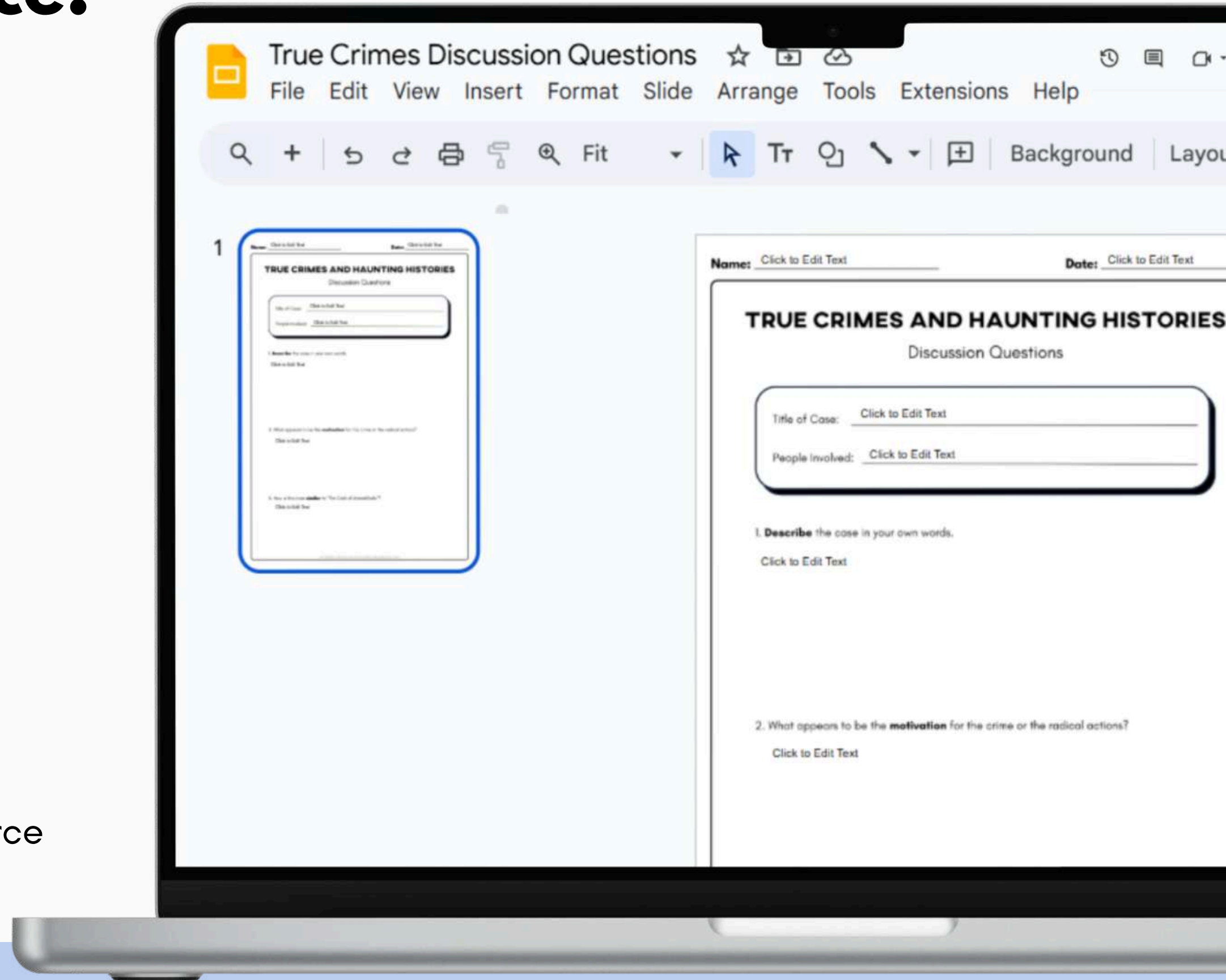
- **Engage students with five eerie nonfiction articles** that provide real-world connections to Poe's themes of crime, justice, and revenge.
- **Encourage critical thinking and thematic analysis** through discussion questions that compare fictional motives with haunting real-life cases.
- **Guide writers in developing strong arguments** using a structured paragraph assignment, mentor text example, and ready-to-use rubric.

**Compare common themes in nonfiction and classic literature!**

**PURCHASE HERE**

# Included with this resource:

- ✓ **5 True Crime Nonfiction Articles**
  - Explore real-life stories of fraud, coercion, mystery, and immurement!
  - Lexile levels range between 950L – 1250L
- ✓ Article **Discussion Questions**
- ✓ Argumentative Paragraph **Assignment Outline**
- ✓ Argumentative Paragraph **4-Level Rubric**
- ✓ **Mentor Text: Student Example** Argumentative Paragraph
- ✓ Editable **4-Level Rubric**
- ✓ **Teacher Instructions** for how to use this resource



Includes Digital Version for Google Drive®

# True Crime Analysis Activity

These true crime cases provide a rich foundation for comparing motives, outcomes, and moral complexity with "The Cask of Amontillado."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## TRUE CRIMES AND HAUNTING HISTORIES


Discussion Questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### True Crimes & Haunting Histories

#### MARTY AND THE SHRINK

Marty Markowitz was a wealthy man, but in 1981, 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 30 years later, that Marty reconnected with his estranged sister and began to reclaim his life.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ARGUMENTATIVE PARAGRAPH


Edgar Allan Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado"

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### True Crimes & Haunting Histories

#### "I HAVE A BRIDGE TO SELL YOU!"

George C. Parker established a fortune as a successful business man in New York City, at a time when the city was known as the "Golden Door" to America. Parker targeted immigrants coming to New York; new to the city and in search of a better life, these immigrants were the perfect candidates for his scheme.



Parker owned the Brooklyn Bridge and convinced immigrants to work as employees in the city. He would eventually gain the trust of these immigrants and bring them to the bridge, which he had a sign that said "For Sale." When his new employees would ask about the sign, Parker would advertise the sale of the bridge as an opportunity to make a fortune.

Victims of the bridge believed that they could charge access to the bridge by acquiring it at a low price. Parker would negotiate to "sell" the bridge for whatever price his victims could afford; this ranged from a couple hundred to tens of thousands of dollars.

When the bridge was made, the new "owners" of the Brooklyn Bridge would try to set up their own toll booths to collect payment from cars crossing the bridge. Any hopes of an easy fortune were crushed by the police, who would stop their efforts and inform them of their mistake.

The bridge was not Parker's only claim of ownership. Parker also "sold" Madison Square Park, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Statue of Liberty. Parker was eventually arrested for fraud in 1908, but managed to escape his trial by stealing a sheriff's jacket and hat and casually walking out of the building. Unfortunately, Parker continued to run into trouble with the law; in 1928, he was finally sentenced to life in prison after his fourth felony involving a fraudulent check for \$150.


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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### True Crimes & Haunting Histories

#### DEATH BY IMMUREMENT

Immurement describes the process of burying a person alive, or trapping them in an enclosed space where they will die of starvation or asphyxiation. This practice has been used as a torture method in multiple civilizations; in some cultures, immurement has even been utilized to punish those who sacrifice to their gods.



In Buddhism, monks voluntarily practice immurement as a part of a religious practice. This practice involves self-immurement with the goal to transcend the physical world through a state of meditative trance called *nyujo*. This meditative state is thought to empower the monk to return to the Earth realm and bring about the healing of humanity. This state establishes the monk as a *sokushinbutsu*.

To achieve this state, monks would reserve 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 survive. After a thousand days of starvation, the monk would fast on water until he was buried alive.

This process would place the monk ten feet underground with nothing but a bamboo tube to allow the monk to breathe. The monk would ring a bell to signify that he was still alive. The monk would remain in a deep state of meditation until he died. At this point, the bamboo tube would be 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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# Explore Five True Crime Reading Passages

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


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



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



True Crimes & Haunting Histories

**"I HAVE A BRIDGE TO SELL YOU!"**


In the 1880s, George C. Parker established himself as a cunning conman in New York City, known at the time as the "Golden Door" to



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.

True Crimes & Haunting Histories

**THE LOVER IN THE ATTIC**

Korschell was born in 1880 in Wisconsin. When she began working at a textile factory where she met her lover, Fred, she was 17. Dolly turned 17, she was helping him with the



pairs of a different type of employees, Otto's sewing machine had stopped working. Otto moved to the house for a beginning of their romantic relationship. While Fred was busy working, Dolly would invite Otto over to their home. She became concerned about the noise of Fred entering and leaving the house, so she suggested that Otto move into the attic.


Dolly ensured that the new house had an attic and moved Otto in before they arrived. Consequentially, Fred continued to hear noises; this caused strain in their relationship. One day, a fight between Dolly and Fred escalated to the point where Otto intervened and shot Fred in the chest. To establish her alibi and frame a robber, he locked Dolly in a closet.

Strangely, even after eliminating Fred and covering their crimes, Otto continued to live in Dolly's attic. Dolly even found a new husband - a successful businessman named Hermann, who eventually discovered Otto and turned Dolly in to the police.

True Crimes & Haunting Histories

**AND THE SHRINK**

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# Practice Writing an Argumentative Paragraph

Students will respond to the argumentative prompt provided to consider common themes in this unit

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ARGUMENTATIVE PARAGRAPH

Edgar Allan Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado"

**Instructions:** For this assignment, you will be using information from "The Cask of Amontillado" and from the cases featured in our "True Crimes and Haunting Histories" activity to develop an argument.

Your argumentative paragraph must answer the following prompt:

*"Consider the common traits shared by criminals and extremists. What might drive a person to turn to crime or radicalism and cause harm to others?"*

Be sure to include the following in your paragraph:

- A clear, precise thesis statement that relates to the prompt
- At least three supporting points that relate to the thesis statement
- Relevant information from "The Cask of Amontillado"
- Textual evidence from "The Cask of Amontillado," including paraphrasing and direct quotations
- Proper in-text citations and references for textual evidence
- Relevant information from our classroom lessons and discussions

For assessment expectations, review the 4-level rubric provided.

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Argumentative Paragraph 4-Level Rubric

Category	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Knowledge	Paragraph requires more important information from the short story Information is loosely related to the argumentative prompt Paragraph does not successfully integrate textual evidence See comments below	Paragraph highlights some important information from the short story Information is somewhat related to the argumentative prompt Paragraph integrates textual evidence with some success See comments below	Paragraph highlights important information from the short story related to the argumentative prompt Paragraph integrates relevant textual evidence successfully	Paragraph thoroughly highlights important information from the short story related to the argumentative prompt Paragraph integrates highly relevant textual evidence flawlessly
Inquiry	Thesis statement and supporting points require more clarity, precision, or insight See comments below	Thesis statement and supporting points are somewhat clear and insightful See comments below	Thesis statement and supporting points are written with clarity, precision, and insight	Thesis statement and supporting points are written with flawless clarity and precision; Ideas demonstrate thought-provoking insight
Communication	The grammar and mechanics require improvement Paragraph does not contain paraphrasing or direct quotations See comments below	The grammar and mechanics contain some lapses Paragraph contains either paraphrasing or direct quotations, but not both Citations are not referenced according to MLA standards See comments below	The grammar and mechanics are excellent Paragraph contains both paraphrasing and direct quotations Citations are referenced successfully according to MLA standards	The grammar and mechanics are flawless Paragraph contains both paraphrasing and direct quotations Citations are referenced perfectly according to MLA standards
Application	Paragraph requires more connection to information and ideas introduced in classroom lessons and discussions Paragraph structure requires revision See comments below	Paragraph somewhat relates to information and ideas introduced in classroom lessons and discussions Paragraph structure could use improvement See comments below	Paragraph incorporates information and ideas introduced in classroom lessons and discussions Paragraph structure is formatted according to classroom guidelines	Paragraph expands on information and ideas introduced in classroom lessons and discussions Paragraph structure is formatted flawlessly according to classroom guidelines

**INCLUDES EDITABLE RUBRIC!**



# See what others are saying...

Here's what teachers like you are loving about this **True Crime Analysis Activity!**

 **Extremely Satisfied**

I love teaching "The Cask of Amontillado," and this is an AWESOME extension! I absolutely cannot wait to use it with my students. They are going to love it. Thank you so much!

- Tara B.

 **Extremely Satisfied**

Very helpful extension of the text! My students practiced transferring skills and identifying main ideas.

- Elizabeth W.

 **Extremely Satisfied**

This was a clever segue from "The Cask of Amontillado" and into its real-world connections.

- Natasha W.