



Leaders Guide

The case of the Bluebell Ambush

Purpose of the Activity

The Case of the Bluebell Ambush teaches participants how to:

- Interpret ambiguous evidence
- Separate observation from assumption
- Build multiple hypotheses
- Work collaboratively
- Challenge stereotypes (“foxes do this”, “owls do that”)
- Understand that real investigations rarely have a single obvious answer
- Pick up some tips on tracking and increase observation skills

The goal is not to guess correctly, it’s to reason well.

Timings

The activity can take around 50-60 mins. Here is a suggested order to run the activity

Phase	Activity	Time
1	Introduction	5 min
2	Evidence Review	10–15 min
3	Suspect & Witness Review	10–15 min
4	Hypothesis Building	10 min
5	Group Discussion	10 min
6	Closing Reflection	5 min

Leader Script: What to Say

Use this as your spoken introduction:

“Hermione the Hare has been found deceased in Bluebell Clearing. The woodland investigators have collected evidence. Your job is to interpret the evidence, not to trust what any character says. Every statement is accurate, but none are conclusive. You must build theories using trace, movement, behaviour and environmental clues.”

Reinforce:

- **There is no single piece of evidence that solves the case.**
- **You are not only trying to guess the culprit, you are trying to reason well.**

Phase-by-Phase Leader Instructions

Phase 1: Introduction

- Set the tone: this is a **deductive mystery**, not a guessing game.
- Emphasise ambiguity.
- Explain that all characters are truthful but incomplete.

Phase 2: Evidence Review

Hand out:

- The pack which includes
 - Scene statements
 - Forensic documents
 - Pathologist report

Ask participants to identify:

- What is **certain**
- What is **uncertain**
- What is **missing**
- What is **ambiguous**
- What could fit **multiple suspects**

Leader tips:

- Stop them jumping to conclusions.
- Encourage them to highlight physical trace: drag marks, fur, feather, vegetation disturbance, movement direction.

Phase 3: Suspect & Witness Review

Ask participants to:

- Map each suspect's claimed route
- Note contradictions
- Compare witness sounds with suspect timings
- Identify overlaps in movement
- Consider opportunity
- Consider omissions

Leader reminders:

- Proximity ≠ guilt
- Hearing ≠ seeing
- Movement ≠ motive
- Absence of evidence ≠ evidence of absence

Phase 4: Hypothesis Building

Split into small groups.

Each group must produce **three possible theories**, not one.

For each theory, they must list:

- Supporting evidence
- Contradicting evidence
- Missing evidence
- Assumptions
- Alternative explanations

This prevents tunnel vision.

Phase 5: Group Discussion

Bring everyone together.

Ask each group to present:

- Their strongest theory
- Their weakest theory
- The most ambiguous evidence
- The most compelling evidence
- What they wish they knew but don't

Leader role:

- Ask questions
- Highlight contradictions
- Point out overlooked evidence
- Encourage alternative interpretations
- Prevent species stereotyping

You **do not** confirm or deny any theory.

Phase 6: Closing Reflection

End with:

- Real investigations are often ambiguous
- Evidence can be misleading or incomplete
- Different interpretations can all be valid
- The aim is to think like investigators, not guessers

Do not reveal the culprit until the very end.

Leader Prompts (Use These to Deepen Thinking)

- “What evidence supports that?”
- “What evidence contradicts that?”
- “What assumptions are you making?”
- “Could this trace have more than one explanation?”
- “What alternative movement pattern fits the same evidence?”
- “If this suspect is innocent, who else fits the same sign?”
- “What evidence is missing that you wish you had?”
- “Does any suspect’s statement conflict with the physical trace?”
- “What does the environment tell you about timing?”

Safety & Group Management Tips

- Keep the tone fun and investigative.
- Ensure all participants get a chance to speak.
- Encourage quieter members by assigning roles (evidence reader, mapper, summariser).
- Remind the group that there is better reasoning by working together and discussing the evidence.
- Its okay to guess wrong, the activity here is teamwork and reasoning.

What Leaders Should NOT Do

- Do not steer them toward a specific suspect.
- Do not reveal the “culprit” until the end.
- Do not let them rely on species stereotypes.
- Do not let one confident participant dominate the reasoning.
- Do not allow “gut feeling” answers without evidence.

Summary for Leaders

The case of the Bluebell Ambush works because:

- The evidence is ambiguous
- The statements are incomplete
- The environment matters
- The suspects overlap
- The witnesses are unreliable
- The participants must think, not guess

Your job is to **facilitate thinking**, not provide answers.

Culprit

The Actual Culprit is Greta the Goshawk”