**Minute Mysteries**

**Step-by-Step Instructions**

1. Challenge your group to solve a mystery (with limited facts) as quickly as possible.
2. To help them find a solution, your group can only ask you questions that can be answered with “YES” or “NO.”
3. When ready, state the facts of a particular mystery, eg “Romeo and Juliet are dead, lying in a puddle of water with broken glass everywhere. How did they die?”
4. Invite your group to start asking questions. You may only respond with “YES” or “NO.”
5. You may respond with “IRRELEVANT” if your answer to a question does not bring the group closer to a solution.
6. If, after ten or more minutes, your group has not solved the mystery, you may guide your group to ask questions about a certain topic to draw them closer to a solution. Eg “Where did the water come from?”
7. Once solved, present another mystery if your group is interested.

**How To Play Narrative**

In my experience, groups love these little minute mysteries even though they tend to take a lot more than a minute to solve sometimes.

Here’s the basic set-up. Gather your group, invite them to sit them down and present the ‘facts, the whole facts and nothing but the facts’ of a particular situation.

Upon digesting the facts, you then invite your group to ask a series of questions that can be answered only with a “YES”, “NO” or ‘IRRELEVANT” reply.

To get you started, this is one of my favorite mysteries:

“ROMEO AND JULIET ARE DEAD, LYING IN A PUDDLE OF WATER WITH BROKEN GLASS EVERYWHERE. HOW DID THEY DIE?”

Hmmmm? There are just so many lines of enquiry which may follow this information. Yet, it is critical that you only respond to ‘Yes / No’ questions. For example, do not respond to “HOW OLD WERE THEY?” rather “WERE THEY YOUNGER THAN 10 YEARS OLD?” is cool.

Often times, a group will ask questions that are irrelevant or do not help the group to get closer to a solution. If this occurs, simply say “IRRELEVANT” and invite another question.

As the minutes tick by, your group will narrow their focus and finally arrive at the solution. It’s frustrating, it’s exciting and, most of all, fun.

On occasions, you may need to guide your group to ask questions about a certain topic to draw them closer to a solution, eg “Focus your attention on the type of house they were in.”

As with all lateral-thinking exercises, it is critical that you do not let these mysteries linger for too long, lest people quickly disengage and will likely refuse to play them again.

By the way, the answer to that second question above is “YES.” The solution? Romeo and Juliet were fish, and their fish tank fell and crashed to the floor. Poor fishies.

**More Minute Mysteries**

Here are fifteen more mysteries that will keep you and your group busy for a while:

* A man pushes his car in front of a hotel and declares bankruptcy. Why?  
  The man is playing Monopoly and can not afford to pay the ‘rent.’
* Two men go into a bar and order exactly the same drink. The first man chugs his drink while the second man savors it. Within an hour, the second man dies. Why?  
  The ice cubes in both drinks were poisoned. The first man did not give time for the ice to melt. The second man sipped his drink, so the ice had time to release its poison.
* A man leaves home, and when he returns to it a short while later, he finds two men in masks waiting for him. Why?  
  The man is a baseball player, and the two men in masks are the umpire and catcher.
* In the old West a man rides into town on Friday. He stays for three days and leaves on Friday. How can this be?  
  The horse’s name is Friday.
* There is a man walking down the road dressed entirely in black. There are no lights on anywhere and no moon. A car with no lights comes down the road and manages to avoid the man. How?  
  It’s day time.
* You are in a cabin with four walls all facing south. There is a bear outside. What color is the bear?  
  White. The cabin is at the tip of the North Pole.
* You walk into a room with only one match. You must light a lantern, a gas stove, the pilot light of a water heater and a fire in a fireplace. What do you light first?  
  The match!
* Fifty people were sitting in a cabin eating a snack when they all suddenly died. What happened?  
  The people were sitting in an airplane cabin, and the plane crashed killing everyone on board.
* A woman is found hanging from a noose from the roof of an empty room. There is a puddle of water on the floor and the room is locked from the inside. What happened?  
  The woman stood on a huge block of ice which, as it melted, hung her.
* A man lives on the 40th floor of an apartment building. Every day, the man rides the elevator to the Ground floor and goes to work. Yet, when the man returns home, he gets off at the 10th floor and then walks 30 flights of stairs up to his apartment. Why?  
  The man is very short and can only reach the button of the 10th floor.
* A man is found dead lying in the middle of a field with a pack on his back. What happened?  
  The man is a skydiver and his parachute failed.
* A father and son are involved in a car accident. The father dies, but the boy survives and is taken to the hospital for surgery. A grey-haired, bespectacled surgeon looks at the boy and says, “I cannot operate on this boy – he’s my son.” Why?  
  The surgeon is the boy’s mother.
* A man is running down a hallway. Suddenly the lights start to flicker and he stops. He turns around and walks back to his office. What happened?  
  The man is a prison warden, on his way to tell a prisoner on death row that he had been pardoned. When the lights flicker, he knows that it’s too late because the prisoner has just been executed.
* A man wearing a scuba suit is found dead in the middle of a forest. What happened?  
  The man was diving in a nearby lake when he was accidentally scooped up by a water bomber to dump a load of water on a bush fire.
* A man walks into a bar and asks for a drink. The barman pulls out a gun. The man says “Thank you” and leaves. What happened?  
  The man had hiccups, but the gun scares them away.