



## Who Had the Strongest Motive for Murder?

*This MysteryQuest investigates which of four potential suspects had the strongest motive in the 1901 murders of Ada Redpath and Cliff Redpath—two members of a wealthy Montreal family.*

*A critical thinking challenge to accompany*

**Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History**  
**The Redpath Mansion Mystery**

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/31/indexen.html>

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*based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium*

[www.tc2.ca](http://www.tc2.ca)

**Ages**

11-14

**Courses**

Canadian history, social studies, civics, law

**Key Topics**

- evidence and interpretation
- life of wealthy families in Montreal in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Canada

### **Critical Challenges**

- Assess the motives of four potential suspects in the Redpath deaths, and draw a sound conclusion about who had the strongest motive.

### **Broad Understanding**

- Students will learn about the life of wealthy families in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Montreal.
- Students will learn to consider various factors when drawing conclusions based on historical evidence.

### **Requisite Tools**

#### ❖ **Background knowledge**

- awareness of the social and economic conditions in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Montreal
- knowledge of the suspects and of the facts surrounding the case

#### ❖ **Criteria for judgment**

- criteria for a strong motive (e.g., perceived gain, eagerness, flawed character)

#### ❖ **Critical thinking vocabulary**

- inference

#### ❖ **Thinking strategies**

- data charts
- rating scale

#### ❖ **Habits of mind**

- attention to detail

### **Independent Study**

- This lesson can be used as a self-directed activity by having students individually or in pairs work through the guided instructions and support material found on [MysteryQuest 31](#).

### **Whole Class Activities**

- On the following pages are suggested modifications of the self-guided procedures found on the MysteryQuest website for use with a class of students. For convenience, each support material and set of procedures are linked next to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

### **Suggested Activities**

#### **Set the context**

- Without prior discussion, project the image of the first of two newspaper articles found in the Secondary Sources section of [Evidence in the Case](#). Ask students to think like a detective by looking for clues in the article to determine what this case is about. If necessary, suggest the 5W's as an organizing structure.
- Project the image of the second newspaper article. This article offers conflicting information. Ask students to look for evidence about who might be responsible for the two death.

### **Discuss the challenge**

- Using [The Task](#) as a guide, explain to students that their challenge is to work in pairs or small groups to investigate the possible motives of one of four potential suspects in the case. At the end of their investigation students will decide which of the four potential suspects has the strongest motive for murder.

### **Learn about the family**

- Using [Step 1: Learn about the Redpath family](#) as a guide, describe the strong bonds shared by the Redpath family, who lived in an elite region of Montreal at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Direct students to the last two articles in the Secondary Sources section of [Evidence in the Case](#) to learn more about the family. Alternatively, use the information in the articles as teacher background notes for a brief oral overview of social conditions at the time.

### **Investigate the suspects**

- Using [Step 2: Investigate the suspects](#) as a guide, direct students to work in assigned groups to learn more about one of four lead suspects. Each group is to read the biography for its assigned suspect found in the Biographies section of [Evidence in the Case](#).

### **Consider possible motives**

- Using [Step 3: Consider possible motives](#), discuss common motives for committing a crime. Ask each group to draw upon their suspect's biographical information to infer one or more motives. Arrange for various groups to share the biographical information and potential motives for their suspect. Direct each individual to record the information and motives for each suspect on the data chart, [Suspects and Motives](#).

### **Explore the basis for establishing motive**

- Using [Step 4: Explore the basis for establishing motive](#), share the three factors to consider when drawing conclusions about the plausibility of a motive.

### **Look for evidence**

- Using [Step 5: Look for evidence](#), instruct students in their groups to look for evidence of their assigned suspect's motives found in the documents located in the **Suspects' supporting**

**documents** of [Evidence in the Case](#). Distribute copies of [Rating the Strength of Motives](#) for groups to record evidence that may establish or refute one or more motives for their suspect.

### **Rate the strength of motives**

- Using [Step 6: Rate the strength of motives](#) as a guide, explain that students are now ready to assess the strength of the motive for their assigned suspect using the rating scales found on the right-hand side of [Rating the Strength of Motives](#). Encourage each group to record any questions or concerns about the quality of the evidence for each factor.
- Arrange for all the groups who investigated the same suspect to share their conclusions with each other. Select spokespersons to share the information for each of the four suspects with the rest of the class.

### **Identify the prime suspect**

- Using [Step 7: Identify the prime suspect](#), suggest that students are ready to draw a conclusion about the suspect with the strongest motive for the murders. Invite the selected spokespersons to present the evidence for their assigned suspect. After listening to the four presentations, direct students individually to reach their own conclusion about the suspect with the strongest motive. Direct students to record their decision and reasons on their own copy of [Identifying the Prime Suspect](#). Afterwards, invite various students to share and justify their conclusions about the prime suspect.

### **Evaluation**

- Use the rubric [Assessing Evidence and Conclusions](#) to evaluate how well students were able to identify relevant evidence from the documents and draw plausible conclusions about the strength of various motives.

### **Extension**

- Invite students to pursue the suggested activities listed in [Extension](#).