



Was the Redpath verdict plausible?

This MysteryQuest examines the soundness of the jury's verdict that Ada and Cliff Redpath had died as a result of a murder-suicide.

A critical thinking challenge to accompany

Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History
The Redpath Mansion Mystery

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/33/indexen.html>

Author: Catriona Misfeldt
Editors: Illan Danjoux, Ruth Sandwell, Atul Bahl
Series Editor: Roland Case

based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium
www.tc2.ca

Ages
14-16

Courses
Canadian history, social studies, civics, law

Key topics

- historical evidence
- upper class life in early 20th century Montreal

Critical Challenges

- Look for evidence that supports or contradicts the juror's verdict in the Redpath case.
- Assess the plausibility of the verdict in the Redpath case.

Broad Understanding

- Students will learn to find and assess evidence from primary and secondary sources to support a conclusion.

Requisite Tools

❖ **Background knowledge**

- knowledge of the details surrounding the Redpath case

❖ **Criteria for judgment**

- criteria for a plausible verdict (e.g., abundant evidence, strong evidence, consistent explanation)

❖ **Critical thinking vocabulary**

- supporting and contradictory evidence

❖ **Thinking strategies**

- data chart
- rating scale

❖ **Habits of mind**

- open-mindedness

Independent Study

- This lesson can be used as a self-directed activity by having students individually or in pairs work their way through the guided instructions and support material found on [MysteryQuest 33](#).

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

Using [Introduction](#) as a guide, set the context for the investigation. Remind students of the role of juries (e.g., remain impartial, hear witness testimonies, arrive at a verdict). Ask students if they know of situations where incorrect verdicts were reached—perhaps in cases of wrongfully convicted individuals. Discuss the factors that contribute to these flawed decisions (e.g., suppressed evidence, over zealous or partial investigators, tampered evidence, honest mistakes, new information).

Discuss the challenge

- Use [The Task](#) as a guide to explain to students that their challenge will be to assess the plausibility of the jury’s verdict based on a close examination of the evidence available at the time of the inquest.

Learn about the victims’ conditions

- Using [Step 1: Learn about the victims’ conditions](#) as a guide, help students understand the historical context for the causes and cures of medical conditions and illnesses in early 20th century Canada.
- Direct students to work in pairs to examine the four documents in the Background section of [Evidence in the Case](#). Encourage students to take brief notes about any relevant details about the case.

Make an initial judgment

- Using [Step 2: Make an initial judgment](#) as a guide, invite each pair of students to offer an initial assessment of the plausibility of the verdict based on the evidence presented so far. Distribute a copy of [Was the Verdict Plausible?](#) for each pair to record its preliminary conclusion.
- Create groups consisting of three pairs of students. Invite students within these groups to share their initial assessments and the reasons for them.

Look for evidence

- Using [Step 3: Look for evidence](#) as a guide, direct each pair of students to examine the 14 remaining documents found in [Evidence in the Case](#). Encourage students to identify multiple pieces of relevant evidence from the documents and to indicate and explain whether each supports or contradicts the jury’s verdict. Distribute several copies of the chart [Supporting or Contradictory Evidence](#) to each pair of students for them to record their findings.

Re-assess the jury’s decision

- Use [Step 4: Re-assess the jury’s decision](#) as a guide to explain the second assessment of the plausibility of the verdict. Encourage students to remain open-minded as they

weigh the new information they gathered from the documents. Ask each pair of students to indicate on the bottom section of [*Was the Verdict Plausible?*](#) how this further research may have changed their view of the plausibility of the jury's verdict.

Consider the criteria for a sound verdict

- Using [*Step 5: Consider the criteria for a sound verdict*](#) as reference, discuss the criteria for a sound verdict. Distribute a copy of [*My Final Assessment?*](#) so that students individually may assess the quality of the evidence for the verdict in light of the three criteria.

Explain your conclusion

- Using [*Step 6: Explain your conclusion*](#) as a guide, ask students individually to indicate and explain their final judgment about the plausibility of the jury's verdict.

Share student conclusions

- You may wish to engage students in a U-shaped discussion. Ask them to orient themselves along an imaginary "U" on the floor according to their position on the plausibility of the jury's verdict. Call upon students to share their rationale for their assessment. Encourage students to remain open-minded and to change their location on the U as they listen to the reasons offered by other students.

Evaluation

- Use the rubric [*Assessing the Evidence, Explanations and Conclusions*](#) to evaluate how well student were able to identify relevant evidence from the documents, recognize new information from various sources, and rate the plausibility of the verdict.

Extension

- Invite students individually or as a class to pursue the suggested activities listed in [*Extension*](#).