FREE PRINTABLE PACK · RIDDLES

Detective Riddles with Answers

Easy · About 2 minutes each · Age 8 and up

HOW IT WORKS

Read the case, look at the suspects and decide who did it. Every answer follows from something in the story, so nobody needs to guess.

IN THIS PACK

Twelve two-minute cases: observation, logic and wordplay pages 2–7

Answers **pages 8–9**

PRINTING

Print pages 2–7 for the puzzles and keep the answers back. The sheets are A4 and plain black and white. On US Letter paper, choose “Fit to page”.

Detective Puzzles

Every puzzle here can be played free, with a new case each time, at detective-puzzles.com/detective-riddles/

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Two-Minute Cases

Read the case. Tick the suspect you accuse, and say why.

CASE 01 · OBSERVATION

The Missing Sponge

The Little Wickham fête, two o’clock. Mrs Finch’s Victoria sponge sat in the judging tent, whole and uncut, with a first-prize rosette beside it. By quarter past, there was only a plate and a few crumbs.

“Nobody has even tasted it!” said Mrs Finch. “And I told no one what I put in the middle. That was my secret.”

The constable asked three people where they had been.

- ☐ **Mr Pym — Bandmaster**
  “Conducting the band on the green. Two hundred people were watching me, and most of them were wincing.”
- ☐ **Mr Dobbs — Baker, second prize**
  “Nowhere near it. And who would want a sponge with lemon curd in the middle instead of jam?”
- ☐ **Miss Larch — Florist**
  “At my stall, wrestling with the dahlias. I never went near that tent.”

Who took the cake? I accuse _____

because _____

CASE 02 · LOGIC

The Three Bellringers

The ringers of St Oswin’s are famous for two things: ringing slightly out of time, and practical jokes. On Sunday morning the silver handbell was gone from its hook. In its place hung a note.

> **One of us took it.**
> **Only one of us will tell you the truth.**
> **Good luck!**
> — The Bellringers

Inspector Quill sighed, lined up the three ringers and asked each of them the same question: who took the bell?

She thought for about ten seconds. Then she held out her hand to one of them. “The bell, please.”

- ☐ **Ada — Treble bell**
  “Well, it wasn’t me.”
- ☐ **Bert — Tenor bell**
  “Clem took it.”
- ☐ **Clem — The new ringer**
  “I did not take it.”

Who took the bell? I accuse _____

because _____

CASE 03 · WORDPLAY

The Borrowed Cup

The Bowls Club's silver cup had stood on the same shelf for forty years. On Monday morning there was a clean ring in the dust where it used to be, and a note in very neat handwriting.

> **Really, it only wanted a polish.**
> **Our cup will be back by Friday.**
> **Shining like new, I promise.**
> **All the best, a friend.**

"A polite sort of thief," said the club secretary. "But signed 'a friend', which is no help at all."

"Oh, they signed it properly," said Inspector Quill. "You are reading it the wrong way."

- ☐ **Nell Ormerod — Treasurer**
  Holds the only key to the trophy cabinet. Says she lost it in March.
- ☐ **Hugo Pask — Club captain**
  Has won the cup nine times. Writes like a spider that fell in the ink.
- ☐ **Rosa Tindall — Groundskeeper**
  Keeps the green like a billiard table. Cannot stand tarnish.
- ☐ **Dot Shaw — Runs the tea urn**
  Said only last week that the cup was looking dull.

Who borrowed the cup? I accuse _____

because _____

CASE 04 · OBSERVATION

The Kettle in the Dark

At nine o'clock on Thursday night, every light in Marsh Lane went out. A fault at the power station, the newspaper said. There was no electricity in the lane until ten.

At half past nine, somebody walked into Mr Abernathy's front room and walked out with his prize-winning model lighthouse. In the dark, nobody saw a thing.

Three neighbours were asked what they were doing at half past nine.

- ☐ **Mrs Okafor — Piano teacher**
  "Playing the piano by candlelight. Chopin is easier when you can't see the hard bits."
- ☐ **Mr Teale — Retired postman**
  "Fast asleep. I go up at nine sharp. Ask the cat."
- ☐ **Miss Bright — Lodger at number four**
  "Making cocoa. I had just boiled the electric kettle when the church clock struck the half hour."

Who took the lighthouse? I accuse _____

because _____

CASE 05 · LOGIC

Three Coats

Somebody slipped out of Lady Verity’s party with her pearl-handled cake slice. The thief left one clue behind: a green thread caught on the pantry latch.

The last three guests each wore a different coat: one red, one green, one blue. By morning nobody could remember who wore which. The doorman did his best.

“I can’t tell red from blue, never could,” he said. “But I know green, and Mr Birch was not in green. He came alone, I remember that. And Mrs Cole came in arm in arm with whoever wore the blue.”

- [ ] **Miss Ash — The pianist**
- [ ] **Mrs Cole — The cousin**
- [ ] **Mr Birch — The neighbour**

Who wore the green coat? I accuse _____

because _____

CASE 06 · WORDPLAY

The Lemonade Tip

The takings from the church jumble sale had vanished from the cash tin. Next morning an unsigned note was pushed under the bureau door.

> **I saw who took the money.**
> **I am too nervous to write the name, so I have hidden it inside my next sentence.**
> **A jug of lemonade stood by the open tin.**

Inspector Quill read it twice. Then she read it once more, slowly, with her finger under the letters.

Four helpers had been near the table all afternoon.

- [ ] **Stan Pike — Lemonade stall**
  Sold forty-one glasses and drank the rest.
- [ ] **Vera Dunn — Bric-a-brac**
  Spent the afternoon haggling over a chipped teapot.
- [ ] **Enid Frost — Raffle tickets**
  Sold every ticket and won nothing herself.
- [ ] **Mona Hale — Cake table**
  Her table stood right beside the cash tin.

Who took the money? I accuse _____

because _____

CASE 07 · OBSERVATION

Wet Paint

At noon the park keeper gave the slatted bench by the bandstand a fresh coat of green paint. His WET PAINT sign blew into the duck pond almost at once.

At one o’clock he went for his sandwich. When he came back, the brass plaque from the bandstand was gone. Somebody had sat on that bench, waiting for him to leave.

The constable found three people in the park. All three said they had only just arrived.

- ☐ **Mr Sykes — Newspaper seller**
  A smart grey overcoat with three faint green lines across the back, and a newspaper he is holding upside down.
- ☐ **Mr Hartley — Birdwatcher**
  Binoculars round his neck, mud up to his knees, and a notebook that says only “pigeon, pigeon, pigeon”.
- ☐ **Miss Popplewell — Nanny**
  Pushing a pram. Flour on her sleeve, a rattle in her pocket and a yawn she cannot hide.

Who sat on the bench? I accuse _____

because _____

CASE 08 · LOGIC

The Clock in the Mirror

Somebody crept through Mrs Plum’s hall and took the porcelain owl from the sideboard. Mrs Plum saw a shadow and then, in the big hall mirror, her clock.

“Twenty to four,” she told the inspector. “Which is silly. It was pitch dark outside and I had finished my supper.”

The clock is a plain one, with two hands and no numbers.

Three people could have come in by the garden door.

- ☐ **The Colonel — Next-door neighbour**
  “Dozing in my armchair all afternoon. Then the chess club, from seven until ten.”
- ☐ **Mr Fogg — Piano tuner**
  “Tuning the vicar’s piano from three until five. Dinner with the mayor until eight. Then I walked home alone.”
- ☐ **Miss Wren — Mrs Plum’s niece**
  “Shopping until five. Then the pictures, from half past seven until ten. I cried all the way through.”

Who took the owl? I accuse _____

because _____

CASE 09 · OBSERVATION

The Holiday Snap

The lucky horseshoe above the door of the Seaview Hotel was taken at exactly twelve noon. The porter heard the nail drop as the town clock began to strike.

Three guests each handed over a holiday photograph, and each swore it was taken at noon that same day.

“A photograph can’t tell you the time,” said the hotel manager.

“This one can,” said Inspector Quill, and she tapped one of the three.

- ☐ **Mr Lake — Room 4**
  In a rowing boat on the bay. His shadow is a small dark puddle under the seat.
- ☐ **Mrs Marsh — Room 9**
  On the pier with an ice cream. Behind her, the pier clock says twelve.
- ☐ **Mr Nash — Room 12**
  On the beach, waving. His shadow stretches right across the sand, as long as a bus.

Whose photograph is lying? I accuse _____

because _____

CASE 10 · LOGIC

The Clipped Ticket

The night train stops at Aldbury, then Brock, then Carrow. The conductor walks the carriages only once, just after Aldbury, and clips every ticket he finds.

Lady Hobb’s hatbox was on the luggage rack at Aldbury. By Brock it was gone, hat and all.

At Carrow the inspector looked at three passengers and three tickets.

- ☐ **Miss Fenn — First class**
  “I got on at Aldbury and sat in the dining car with the vicar all the way.” The vicar agrees. Her ticket is clipped.
- ☐ **Mr Gale — Second class**
  “I got on at Brock. I can’t have taken a thing.” His ticket is clipped.
- ☐ **Mrs Hart — Second class**
  “I got on at Brock too.” Her ticket is not clipped.

Who took the hatbox? I accuse _____

because _____

CASE 11 · WORDPLAY

The Boathouse Code

The rowing club’s antique river map had been missing since Sunday. On Wednesday a folded note fell out of a library book in the clubhouse. It looked like nonsense.

> **NFFU BU UIF CPBUIPVTF.**
> **CSJOH UIF NBQ.**
> — JWZ

“It is a very simple code,” said Inspector Quill. “The first word is MEET. See what has happened to each letter, then do the same to the signature.”

- ☐ **Jez Whitlow — Boatman**
  Signs for every delivery with a scribble.
- ☐ **Ivy Lark — Cox**
  Steers the first boat and shouts the loudest.
- ☐ **Kay Dunmore — Treasurer**
  Has borrowed the same library book three times.

Who wrote the note? I accuse _____

because _____

CASE 12 · OBSERVATION

Ice in the Glass

It was the hottest afternoon of the summer. At about three o’clock, somebody lifted the manager’s gold fountain pen from the front desk of the Grand Pavilion Hotel.

At half past three the inspector walked out to the terrace, where three guests sat in the full sun.

- ☐ **Mr Quince — Room 2**
  “I haven’t moved since noon. Same chair, same glass of ginger beer.” The ice clinks as he lifts it.
- ☐ **Mrs Vane — Room 7**
  “I have been in this deckchair since lunch, asleep under my hat.” Her newspaper has slid to the floor and her nose is turning pink.
- ☐ **Mr Okoro — Room 11**
  “Here since one o’clock, painting the bay.” His picture is nearly finished and the sky on it is already dry.

Who took the pen? I accuse _____

because _____

Two-Minute Cases: Answers

Who did it, and the clue that gives them away.

Case 01. The Missing Sponge: Mr Dobbs

The cake was never cut, and Mrs Finch told no one about her secret filling. The only way to know about the lemon curd was to bite into the sponge. Mr Dobbs came second, and then he ate the evidence.

Case 02. The Three Bellringers: Ada

Bert says Clem took it. Clem says that is not so. Those two statements are opposites, so one of them is true and the other is false. The note allows only one truth, and that pair has used it up. So Ada is lying, and Ada said “It wasn’t me.”

Case 03. The Borrowed Cup: Rosa Tindall

Read the first letter of each line of the note, from top to bottom: R, O, S, A. Rosa Tindall signed her work after all. The cup came back on Friday, and it has never been shinier.

Case 04. The Kettle in the Dark: Miss Bright

The lane had no electricity from nine until ten. An electric kettle cannot boil in a power cut, so Miss Bright made up her cocoa. At half past nine she was out in the dark with a lighthouse under her arm.

Case 05. Three Coats: Mrs Cole

Mr Birch was not in green. He came alone, so he was not in blue either, because blue arrived with Mrs Cole. That puts Mr Birch in red. Mrs Cole cannot be in blue, since she walked in beside it, and red is taken. So Mrs Cole wore the green coat, and the green thread is hers.

Case 06. The Lemonade Tip: Mona Hale

The name hides inside one word: le-MONA-de. Mona Hale ran the cake table, right beside the cash tin.

Case 07. Wet Paint: Mr Sykes

The bench was painted at noon and the sign blew away, so anyone who sat on it took the stripes with them. Mr Sykes says he has only just arrived, but his coat has three green lines across the back. He sat on that bench, waiting for the keeper to leave.

Case 08. The Clock in the Mirror: Mr Fogg

A clock seen in a mirror is flipped left to right. Hands that seem to say twenty to four are really saying twenty past eight, which fits the dark and the supper. At twenty past eight the Colonel was at chess and Miss Wren was at the pictures. Mr Fogg had left the mayor at eight and was walking home alone, by way of Mrs Plum’s garden door.

Case 09. The Holiday Snap: Mr Nash

At noon the sun is at its highest and shadows are at their shortest. Mr Nash’s shadow stretches right across the beach, so his photograph was taken early in the morning or late in the day. At noon he was somewhere else, with a horseshoe.

Case 10. The Clipped Ticket: Mr Gale

The conductor clips tickets once only, just after Aldbury and before the train reaches Brock. A clipped ticket means its owner was already on board. Mr Gale says he got on at Brock, but his ticket is clipped, so he was on the train while the hatbox was still on the rack. Miss Fenn was with the vicar, and Mrs Hart’s clean ticket shows she really did get on late.

Case 11. The Boathouse Code: Ivy Lark

Each letter in the note has been moved one step forward in the alphabet: M became N, E became F, T became U. Step every letter back and the note reads MEET AT THE BOATHOUSE. BRING THE MAP. The signature JWZ steps back to IVY: Ivy Lark, the cox.

Case 12. Ice in the Glass: Mr Quince

On the hottest day of the summer, ice in a glass in the full sun melts in minutes. Mr Quince says he has had the same drink since noon, yet at half past three there is still ice in it. That glass was poured a few minutes ago, by a man who had just come back from the front desk.