

Famous

Ghost Stories

5th
Grade

as sleep-deprived in the room, in the face, arms, and a torso, still thinking I was imagining it. The faintest hint of hot breath on my neck. For a moment and I froze in fear. Then, just as soon as it had happened.

Fill out the Venn diagram with information about the two stories.

Arya

Stephen

Both

THE MAN HAD BOILS ALL OVER HIS FACE AND BODY.

What can you tell about the first witness by his statement?

- a. He is stubborn.
- b. He is gullible.
- c. He is 35 years old.

agree about what they saw? Give two



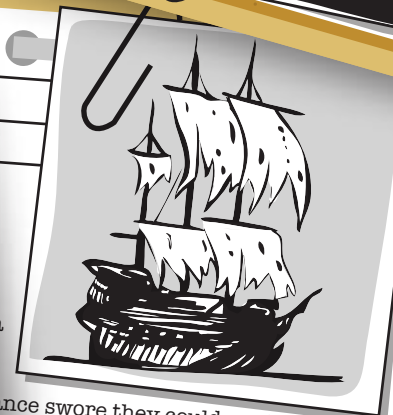
CASE: The Flying Dutchman

LOCATION: The North Sea



Supporting Details

The Haunted Forest



The Flying Dutchman

ance swore they could see the spirit sister, protecting her from the a terrible crime, and were cursed

tings of a spectral ship floating on of hurricanes.

ata morgana, which is like a mirage is when it hits warm air

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Congratulations Detective,

You've been assigned to unravel some of the oldest, most confounding mysteries from across the globe.

You'll need to compare multiple accounts of the same topic, analyzing statements from witnesses who claim they've seen, heard, and sensed some of the strangest things.

Are you up for the challenge?

Turn the page to start your first assignment.

CASE: The Haunted Forest

LOCATION: Japan

Aokigahara is a forest at the foot of Mount Fuji. It's a thick, green forest, but visitors say it's cursed. Compasses are often rendered useless by the rich deposits of magnetic iron in the area's volcanic soil. Due to the vastness of the forest, visitors are unlikely to encounter anyone once inside the so-called "Sea of Trees."

Legend has it that in ancient times of famine, families abandoned old and young here. Aokigahara is said to be haunted with the souls of the abandoned. Their spirits are said to scream through the night, especially between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m., the Japanese witching hour.

WITNESS: Kyo Tanaka, hiker:

This was about a year ago, on a hike I took for myself. After my first day, I found a good spot to bed down for the night and set up my camp. But at around 2 in the morning, I was awoken by a high-pitched scream. I looked outside my tent but there was nothing there, so I went back to sleep thinking that I'd dreamt it.

The next day, I continued hiking. I thought I knew the way, but when I checked my compass to make sure, the arrow was spinning instead of pointing north. I've been hiking for years, so I can usually find my way when I get lost, but not this time—I became totally disoriented. I walked and walked, but as darkness fell, I had no choice but to camp where I was. At around 2 a.m. again, I heard the same high-pitched scream. I grabbed my flashlight and went outside my tent. The beam of light swept over a small figure in white. I tried to call out, but found that my voice caught in my throat and I couldn't speak. I turned my flashlight off, crept back to the tent, and stayed awake the rest of the night.

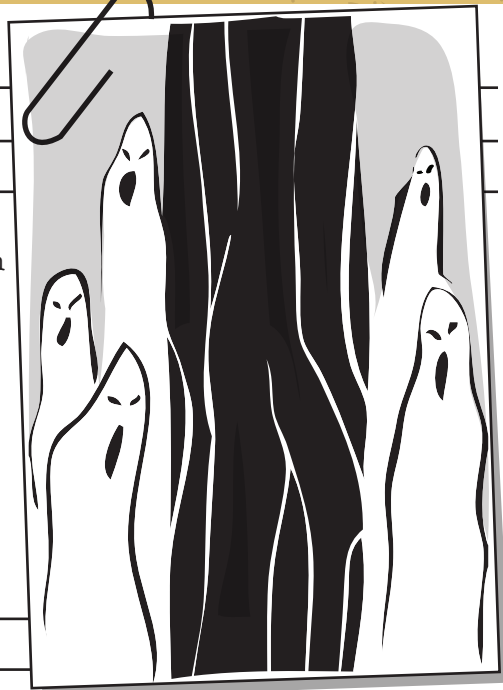
The next day, I still had no clue where I was. I hiked on, hoping to find my way out, when I stumbled upon a skull and a pile of bones half buried in the dirt. I began to run. I don't know how long I ran until I saw the forest workers' lodge and called the police there.

WITNESS: Yumi Imahara, hiker:

We love the outdoors, so for our anniversary we thought we'd take camping trip together. We decided to go to the Aokigahara Forest, because it's nearby, and we've never been there. Everyone thought we were crazy to go because of all the stories about it, but we were sure they couldn't be true.

Well, we had been hiking for a while and were pretty deep into the forest. There were so many trees that it was pretty dark, and surprisingly quiet. Somewhere in the middle of it, we passed by this...it was someone's camp. We figured it was a homeless person, because it was pretty elaborate. The tent had been reinforced, there were pots and pans hanging from the trees, laundry on a line, junk all around—almost like a home. Then, we saw this very old man come around from the back. We said hello, but it was as if he didn't see us.

By nighttime, we set up a camp. We tried to sleep, but we just couldn't. It was so quiet—too quiet. It really freaked us out.



CONTINUED...

CASE: The Haunted Forest

WITNESS: Yumi Imahara, hiker continued:

The next morning, we decided to just go home. There was something not right about this place. As we were packing up our things, we saw...a pile of human bones. We had been sleeping next to them the whole night.

We packed up as fast as we could and got out of there. But the problem was...our compass just would not give correct directions. We walked in circles all day, and eventually we walked right by where we had seen the man the day before, and everything was gone. The laundry, the tent, all of it. There's no way he could have moved all of it that night; he was too far into the woods. We were so lost we didn't make it out until the next morning. Now I completely believe this forest is cursed.

What are three things the two witnesses have in common?

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Does Kyo believe the forest is cursed? Yes or No

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Kyo and Yumi both saw the same skull and bones, but reacted differently. Explain why Kyo and Yumi acted the way they did.

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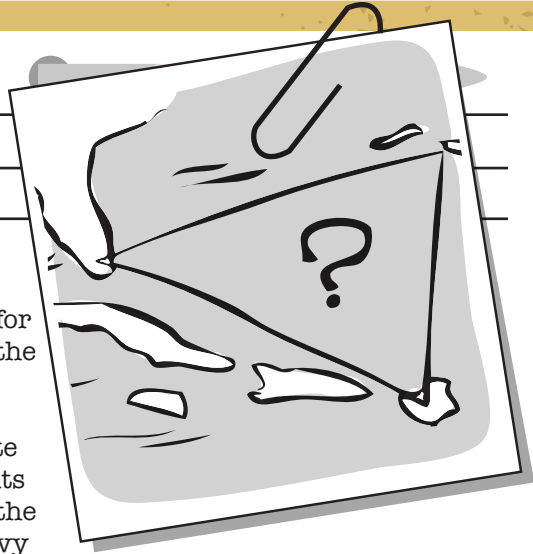
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EVIDENCE:



CASE: Bermuda Triangle

LOCATION: Atlantic Ocean



In the Atlantic Ocean lie mysterious waters known as the Bermuda Triangle. Located between Florida, Bermuda, and Puerto Rico, the Bermuda Triangle is said to be responsible for the disappearance of many planes and boats that pass over the area.

Reports of strange occurrences in the Bermuda Triangle date all the way back to Christopher Columbus, whose instruments began giving incorrect readings on his first voyage through the area. The most famous incident happened in 1945, when Navy pilots, after taking off from Florida, began practicing over the triangle's waters. The controls began giving strange readings, and the pilots all became extremely confused and disoriented until they all crashed into the ocean.

Over the years, a number of planes and boats have disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle, even after communicating to people on land that everything was fine. Even those on land aren't safe: Two lighthouse keepers in the Bahamas mysteriously disappeared from their post in 1969, never seen again.

Though it's become legendary for leading sailors and pilots to their doom, nothing proves that the rate of disaster there is higher than anywhere else in the ocean—many boats and planes pass through the area every day just fine.

WITNESS: Ed Bellis, amateur investigator:

Ever heard of Atlantis? The lost civilization is down there, at the bottom of the water. It's their technology interfering with ours.

WITNESS: Jane Leland, pilot:

Well, the Gulf Stream, one of the strongest ocean currents, does flow right through that way. It can create weird, violent weather patterns sometimes, which might explain the damage to so many ships and planes. I mean, it's not as cool as that Atlantis theory, but I still wouldn't fly over!

WITNESS: Brad Helmsley, Navy Captain:

Oh, please. I know the ocean, and there's nothing strange about that part of the sea. We document every ship that passes through those waters, and it has no higher rate of disaster than anywhere else. It's just a bunch of hokey that bored people have made up for their own amusement.

How does Brad Helmsley's view differ from the first two?

Imagine you were about to take a flight that passed over the Bermuda Triangle. How would you feel? Pretend you are writing an email to a friend about your upcoming flight.

CASE: Building Sacrifice Spirits

LOCATION: Japan

Dating as far back as the 17th century, the story goes that as an offering to the gods, living people could be sealed into buildings as sacrifices, which would apparently ensure stability and longevity to the structure. Bones and other remains have been found on-site of several different locations, lending at least some possibility that sacrifice may have been involved in the making of these buildings. One such location is Jomon tunnel, located on the Sekihoku Main Line. In 1968, in the aftermath of an earthquake, skeletons were discovered sealed into the walls of the tunnel, standing upright.



WITNESS: Goro Honda, firefighter:

As soon as the earthquake happened, my crew rushed into town and found a building that was starting to collapse. I ran inside to check if anyone was stuck inside. I looked around as quickly as I could and, finding nobody, started to run out. It was just as I was passing a row of half-collapsed pillars that I saw them: strange, floating people who were wearing very ancient-looking, feudal-style clothes. I shouted, "We have to get out of here! The building is falling down!" I don't know if they heard me because they didn't move, but a second later, they were gone. I couldn't waste any more time, so I continued heading for the door. I was frightened, both of being crushed and of the strange things I'd seen, but finally I exited just as the building completely crumbled behind me.

WITNESS: Kazuo Matsumoto, firefighter:

(Exhales). That was the worst disaster I've ever responded to. We barely made it out with our lives. Some of the guys are saying they saw spirits...you know, those ghosts our grandparents talk about that are supposed to come when earthquakes happen...I don't think so. I was looking at the same thing, though it was nothing but dust and debris. The mind can play tricks on people in times of panic...

Do you think these two agree about what they saw? Give two reasons to support your answer.

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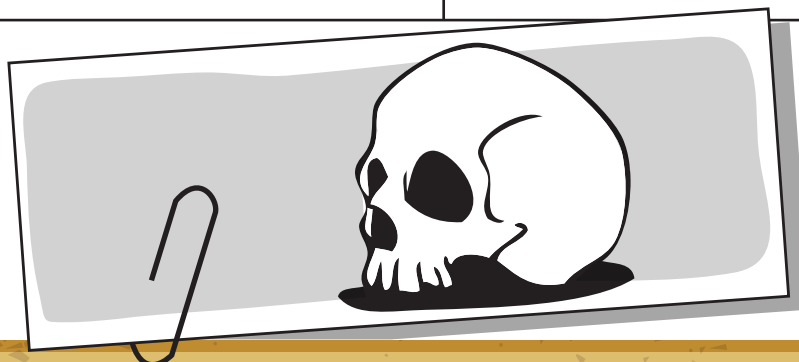
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What can you tell about the first witness by his statement?

- a. He is stubborn.
- b. He is gullible.
- c. He is 35 years old.



ANSWER: b

CASE: Dudleytown**LOCATION:** United States

Once a village full of promise, Dudleytown is now a deserted area in the middle of the forest, full of mystery because of what some believe is an ancient curse upon the land.

In 1748, a man named Gideon Dudley bought a farm Northeastern Connecticut and named the land Dudleytown. As time went on, more and more people came to the settlement and it turned into a thriving community. But after a few decades, strange things started happening. Gideon Dudley's brother slowly lost his mind. A new family moved into his house, but they were shortly attacked by outsiders; the children sold to the British Army. Even the town's most famous resident, a general that had served under George Washington, was not spared. In 1804, his wife was struck by lightning. As time went on, people slowly began to move away, until all but a handful of people remained.

In the early 1900s, one final mysterious event struck one of Dudleytown's last remaining residents, John Brophy. One dark night, John's children disappeared into the woods, never to be seen again. Shortly thereafter, his home caught fire and burned to the ground. Too sad to go on, he simply left Dudleytown that day and walked off into the forest.

After years of Dudleytown being completely deserted, a doctor from New York City visited the area. He fell in love with the beautiful forest, and he and his wife built a cabin there. Not long after, the doctor's wife suddenly came down with a chronic illness. When asked what had happened, and how she had become sick so suddenly, she claimed she was attacked by a strange, evil force, forever cursed to a life of illness.

The land where Dudleytown once was is now private property. The company that owns the land forbids anyone from going in...but some curious people still sneak in.

WITNESS: Doyle Cantor, local resident:

Yeah, I gotta admit I snuck in with some friends of mine when I was in high school—hey, we were curious! The thing that struck us most about it is that it was so quiet...too quiet. No wind rustling the leaves, not even birds chirping. It was dark, and it took us about two minutes before we chickened out and booked it back to the car. Something unsettling about that place...

WITNESS: Andy Gooding, motorcyclist:

I was passing through town on a long ride. It was late in the afternoon, almost evening. The sun was setting, and it looked so pretty. I see so many beautiful sights when I'm on the road that I've taken up photography as a hobby, so I keep my camera with me. I took a picture of the sun setting over the trees and didn't think much of it.

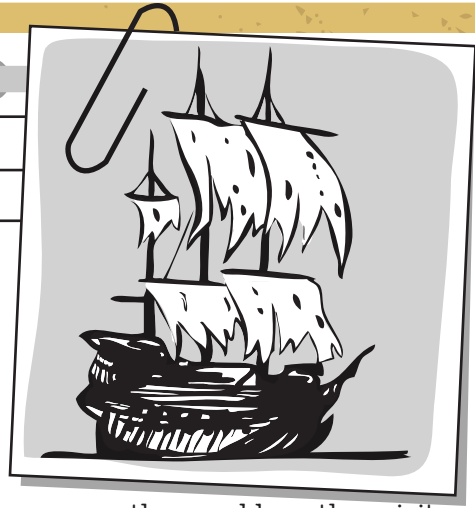
When I got home, I showed it to my wife. In the forest, we both saw a weird white mist, in a shape that...I'm afraid to even say it...kind of looked like a woman. Now, I know for a FACT I was the only person there. It was still light out, and I didn't see or hear anyone else, not even an animal. I'm a big biker guy, and even I was spooked!



CONTINUED...

CASE: The Flying Dutchman

LOCATION: Worldwide



For centuries, sailors have told tales of a ghost ship called The Flying Dutchman, which appears to seafarers to warn them of danger. Though it is eternal, the Flying Dutchman can never make it to land; doomed to roam the seas for eternity.

The story goes that many years ago, a Dutch ship encountered a serious storm, leaving no survivors on board. Her sister ship made it to the Cape of Good Hope, and once repaired, set out again only to encounter another violent storm. Ships in the distance swore they could see the spirit of the ruined ship, the Flying Dutchman, standing in front of her sister, protecting her from the howling gales. Some say the Flying Dutchman's crew committed a terrible crime, and were cursed to be stranded at sea forever.

Since then, seasoned sailors across the world have reported sightings of a spectral ship floating on the seas. In some sailor's myths, ghost ships are the harbingers of hurricanes.

They can be explained by science: there's something known as a fata morgana, which is like a mirage on the ocean. Sometimes, when the conditions are right, light bends when it hits warm air over the ocean and creates reflections of other objects, making them appear as if they are floating.

A ghost ship isn't always the ghost of a ship—sometimes it's a ship filled with ghosts. Throughout history, mysteriously empty ships have turned up adrift in the ocean. The most famous is Mary Celeste, which was found floating in the Atlantic Ocean in 1872 with every single one of her crew gone.

WITNESS: Benjamin Doggett, fishing boat captain:

We were out on a long assignment, and we were almost done. One night, we thought we saw another ship off in the distance. It looked old, with sails and everything, and it almost looked bright, like it was glowing. In the back of my head, I remembered those old stories about the Flying Dutchman, but I quickly dismissed them. Sure enough, later that night, a freak storm almost threw us off course. Now I'm not so sure if they're just stories...

WITNESS: Dave Bertrand, fishing boat captain:

I've heard so many stories of ships like that, and I gotta say, I just don't know. I've been a captain for 20 years, and being alone for so long can really mess with your head.

Which of these qualities do you think you would find in Benjamin?

- a. He likes fantasy movies.
- b. He has a pet cat.
- c. He likes jazz music.

Which of these qualities do you think you would find in Dave?

- a. He is level-headed.
- b. He is spontaneous.
- c. He had soup for dinner.

ANSWERS: a, a

CASE: The Ghost of Hanako

LOCATION: Japan



This urban legend takes place in a washroom—specifically, the third stall from the end of any elementary school washroom (in some versions, it's on the third floor). In order to call Hanako, you need to knock three times on her stall door. This is usually accompanied by calling out, "Are you there, Hanako-san?" If you are greeted with a reply, "Yes, I'm here!" you can push open the stall door to reveal Hanako. Said to be a little girl with bobbed black hair and a red skirt, Hanako-san will either vanish or you will be pulled into the toilet.

WITNESS: Mizuki Kimura, 4th grader at Numazawa Grammar School:

Just before the lunch bell rang, my friend Hanako went to the bathroom. When she didn't come back after a few minutes, I went to look for her because I didn't want her to be late for class. I went into the third floor bathroom and saw that all the stall doors were open except for the third one from the wall, so I thought she must be in there. I knocked and said, "Are you there, Hanako-san?" She answered, "Yes, I'm here!" I thought her voice sounded strange. It didn't sound like her, but who else could it be? The door opened and I saw a girl who was not Hanako. Hanako has long hair, but this girl's was short. Our uniform has a blue skirt, but this girl was wearing a red one. Most of all, I remember her eyes, which were red, just like her skirt. The next thing I knew, Teacher was calling my name and when I opened my eyes, I saw that I was lying on the bathroom floor.

WITNESS: Hideo Fujimoto, janitor at Miyoshi School:

I was cleaning the bathrooms after everyone had gone for the day. I was the only person left on campus. I went in to the girl's restroom, but one of the doors—the third from the end—was locked. Sometimes kids like to play around and lock the doors from the inside, then crawl or climb out, so I wondered if a kid was goofing off in there. I knocked on the door and said, "Hello? Is someone in there? Do you need me to call your parents? Hello? Are you there?" I stopped and listened for a second, but it was silent. Then, suddenly, I heard a faint voice behind the door. I threw it open, and there was a girl there. I swear I saw a girl there. She stared right back at me! But then I blinked, and then she was gone. It went silent again. I dropped my mop and ran home.

How is the janitor's story different from the legend?

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How is Mizuki's story different from the janitor's?

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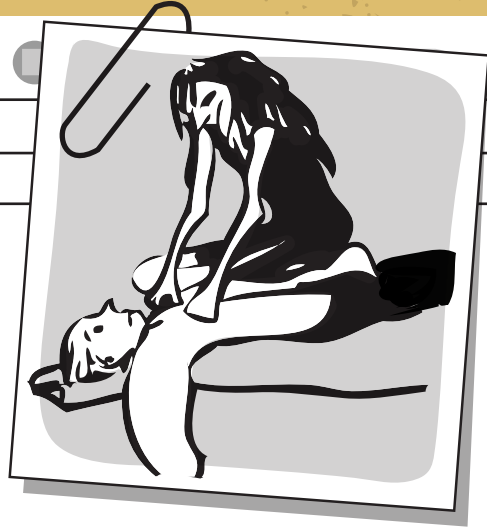
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CASE: Old Hag Syndrome

LOCATION: Worldwide

Sleep paralysis, or "old hag syndrome", is a worldwide phenomenon with a scientific explanation. During sleep paralysis, a person, either when falling asleep or awakening, suddenly cannot move. It is a transitional state between wakefulness and sleep characterized by complete muscle weakness. It is often associated with terrifying visions, such as an intruder in the room, to which one is unable to react due to paralysis. This phenomenon has been documented for decades. Many cultures in the past believed it was caused by a malevolent being, such as a small troll or a witch.



WITNESS: Melinda Harte, sleep paralysis sufferer:

For several nights in a row now I've woken up in the middle of the night with someone sitting on my chest. I would suddenly wake up with a crushing weight on top of me. I could barely breathe. I couldn't move or scream or do anything. It's like I had no control of my body at all. Sometimes, I think I see the glowing eyes of the thing sitting on my chest. Other times, it's completely invisible but it feels very cold. I would pass out from not being able to breathe and when I wake up again in the morning, everything seems normal.

Digging through old case files, you also find this report from 1832...

What hath these demons wrought? For weeks now I have woken with a start in the middle of the night. Some say it is the work of a wraith or ghoul; others have a purely scientific explanation. I know not which to believe...

Why do you think people in older times believed this was caused by a demon or witch?

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What do you think Melinda would say if she saw the report from 1832?

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CASE: The Princess Theater

LOCATION: Australia



We've received several calls about a stranger prowling in the Princess Theater in Melbourne. It is supposedly haunted by a ghost named Frederici. According to legend, Frederick Baker, or "Frederici", was an Italian singer who died on stage in 1888. He was finishing a performance when a trapdoor dropped beneath his feet and he fell beneath the stage, dying from a heart attack. For many years, the Princess Theater saved an open seat for Frederici at every opening-night performance.

WITNESS: Patricia Ashwood, season ticket holder:

I was attending the opera on a very quiet evening. The theater was only half-filled, and there was no one sitting on either side of me as the show opened. However, throughout the performance, I would catch a man sitting next to me out of the corner of my eye. Like I said, no one was sitting in the seats next to me, so I found this very odd. When I turned around to look at him, I saw that the seat next to me was empty! I'd go back to watching the performance but after a while, I'd spy him again, just within my peripheral vision. Each time I turned to look, however, there was no one there.

WITNESS: Jessica Cassidy, actress:

My friend was coming to pick me up, and as a surprise, he came in to watch me finish rehearsing. I was so wrapped up in my practice that didn't see him come in, but I just as I was finishing the scene I heard a huge crash. A piece of wood had fallen from the ceiling, landing right behind him. There was my friend, sitting in right in Frederici's seat, his face frozen in shock. I just laughed and told him to switch seats. On the way home I told him the story of Frederici, and he said, "Well, find someone else to give you a ride next time!"

How was Patricia's experience different from Jessica's? Write your thoughts in the space below.

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Now, write three questions you have for Patricia and three questions you have for Jessica.

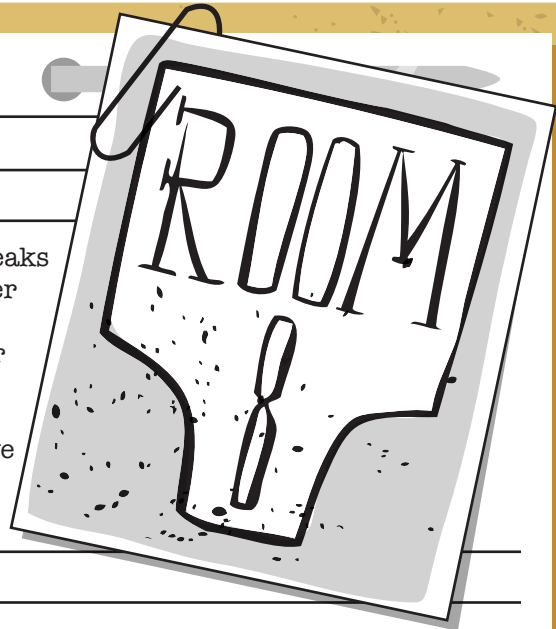
PATRICIA:

JESSICA:

CASE: The Russell Hotel

LOCATION: Australia

The Russell Hotel served as a hospital during deadly outbreaks of smallpox and bubonic plague in the early 1900s, and later became a rooming house and hostel for sailors. Guests of Room 8 report waking to find a dark presence looming over their bed, peering down at them. Others claim to have seen ghosts wandering the hall, or doors opening and closing. Some claim that recent renovations on the old building have only served to rile up the old spirits, and activity is reportedly up.



WITNESS: Arya Chadha, guest:

I'd just checked in earlier that evening. Exhausted from traveling, I fell into bed the minute I entered my room, Room 8. I was sleeping soundly until a chill woke me up. I opened my eyes and saw that a dark figure was looming over me! In the darkness I could just make out a strange man dressed in what appeared to be a hospital gown. He had boils all over his face and body, and pus oozed from the boils. He reached out a hand towards me and, terrified, I squeezed my eyes shut and screamed. I don't know how long I screamed for, but the next thing I knew a bellhop was shaking me awake, asking if I was all right. I opened my eyes and, with the lights now on, didn't see the figure anymore. There was, however, a bloody handprint on the bed sheet.

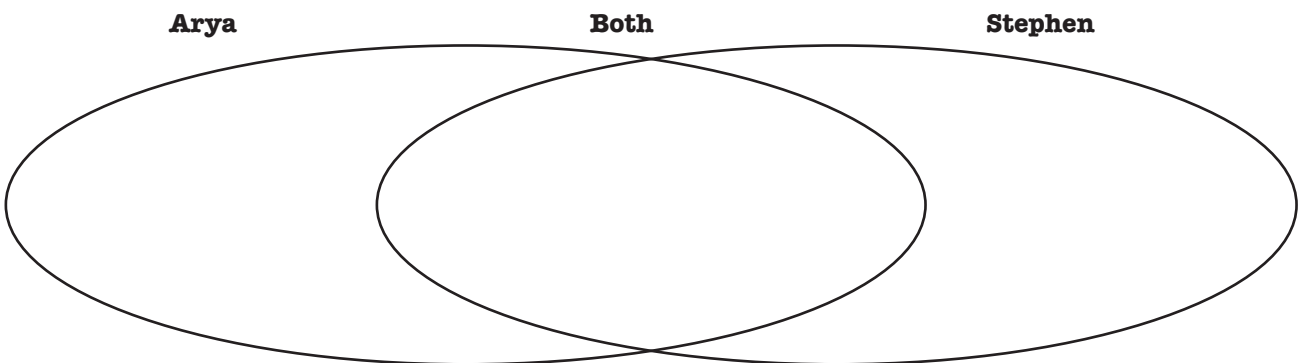
WITNESS: Stephen Woon, guest:

I got in from a long flight at an odd hour, around 1 or 2 in the morning, and I can't even tell you how tired I was. They handed me my key—Room 8—and I dragged myself into the room.

However, I was still on California time. I was jet-lagged and couldn't sleep. I don't know if it was because I was sleep-deprived or what, but I could swear I saw a dark form, even darker than the darkness in the room, in the corner. The longer I stared, the more I was able to make out some clear features: a face, arms, and a torso. Then, very slowly, it began moving towards me. I tried to just close my eyes, still thinking I was imagining it, but I could just feel it getting closer and closer. I could feel the slightest hint of hot breath on my neck. I opened my eyes to see its grinning face right up against mine, and I froze in fear. Then, just as soon as it had come, it disappeared. I didn't sleep at all that night.

The weirdest part was the next morning, going down to the lobby and seeing everyone going about their business, as if nothing unusual had happened.

Fill out the Venn diagram with information about the two stories.



CASE: Stonehenge

LOCATION: United Kingdom

Stonehenge is a strange monument made up of huge stones stacked on top of one another and arranged in a circle. It's so old that the culture that built it left no written records, but scientists estimate from the age of the rock that building of it began around 3100 B.C. Though it's a wonderful feat of human strength, no one knows who built it or why. The rocks are believed to be from Wales—that's almost 150 miles away!

So how—and why—did humans hoist stones so large and fashion them into structures that have remained standing for thousands of years? Throughout history, people have believed all kinds of theories. Some say that a giant built it. Others say that the legendary wizard Merlin had it transported from Ireland. Researchers believe it was a place of worship or healing—Stonehenge sits near many ancient burial grounds, and many of the bodies buried there show signs of injury. Thus, many believe Stonehenge was a monument built to honor the dead, or a place where the sick could come to receive treatment. It also lines up with the sun during the solstice and equinox, so people wonder if it was built as a place to celebrate the changing of the seasons.

There are still people today who believe in and practice ancient mysticism, and use Stonehenge as a place of worship. Due to the size and weight of the stones that make it up, some believe humans couldn't have possibly built it. There are a few people that believe it was built by aliens thousands of years ago.



WITNESS: Bradley Owens, resident:

I saw some strange people dressed in dark robes trek out there late at night. When they got there, they stood in a circle and started chanting...I didn't stick around to find out what they were doing. One of them saw me, so I kept my head down and walked back home, pretending I didn't see them. I don't want them putting a curse on me!

WITNESS: Adele Abbott, resident:

I don't think there's anything strange about it, really... Has anyone considered that maybe they just made it for the art of it? I mean, they didn't have the Internet in those days; they had to do something to entertain themselves!

DID YOU KNOW?:
Not all of the original stones are still there. Over the course of history, some were removed to pave roads or build homes!

Which viewpoint do you most agree with? Explain why.

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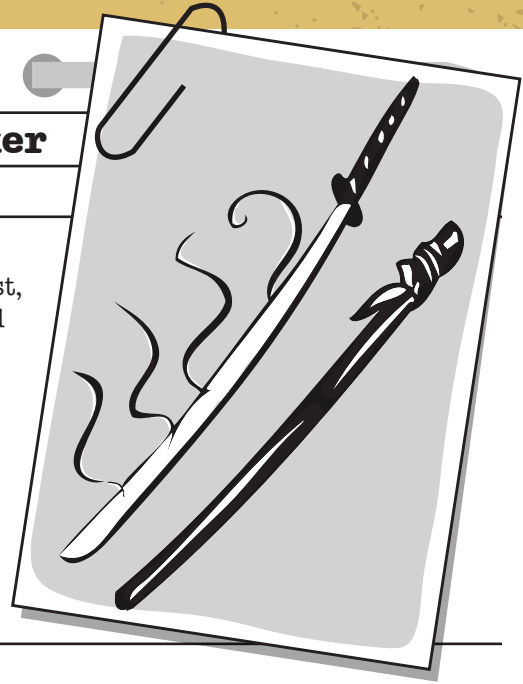
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CASE: The Mad Samurai Sword Maker

LOCATION: Japan

Muramasa Sengo was a 14th century sword craftsman who was much feared by his contemporaries. He was a great artist, but he was also completely mad and often violent. It was said that his madness passed into his swords, which were known for their astounding quality. According to legend, whoever possessed a Muramasa sword became crazy and dangerous. In 1603, the Shogun banned Muramasa swords and instructed that they all be melted down. Today, Muramasa swords are difficult to identify because many had their markings changed to avoid the ban. Authentic Muramasa swords are now considered priceless. Many forgeries have surfaced over the centuries.



WITNESS: Keiko Yukimura, resident:

I had just moved into this old house after my great-grandmother left it to me. There are many old things in this house, including a beautiful samurai sword that's been in my family for generations. People in my family claim it was forged by the great sword craftsman Muramasa Sengo in the 1300s. Anyway, I couldn't sleep, so I was wandering around the house. I was in the living room when I felt the air stir behind me. I turned around and just narrowly managed to avoid being speared by the flying sword! I leapt to the side but, as you can see, I got this deep gash on my arm. You know, I've heard that Muramasa Sengo was crazy and that people who possessed his sword went crazy, too. Maybe his ghost or the ghost of someone who had owned this sword still haunts it.

NEW EVIDENCE:

But wait...you found this letter in a very old file, dating back to 1780:

I feel my mind slipping away...I've begun to hear strange whispers at night, the sound of metal being twisted and scraped. I know that this is not grounded in reality, but must be the work of some unseen wraith sent to torment me...for what misdeeds, I do not know.

As a detective, which witness do you feel is more trustworthy?

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What do you think could be the explanation for the second witness' problems?

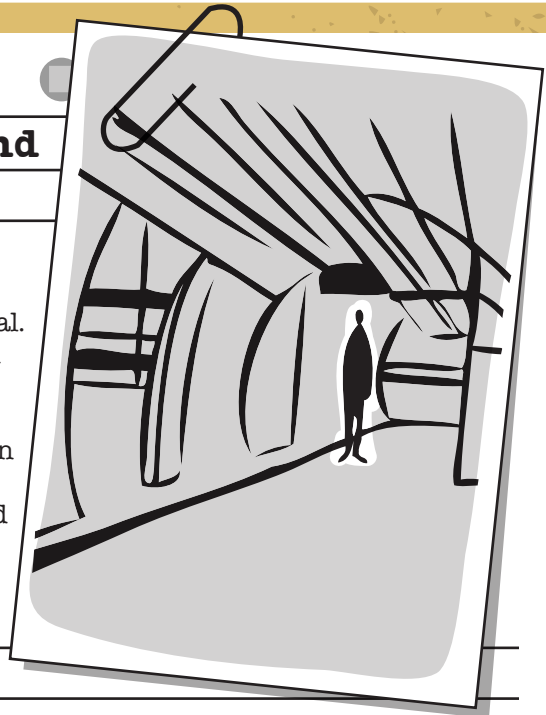
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CASE: Haunted London Underground**LOCATION:** United Kingdom

Since the London Underground first opened in 1863, numerous ghosts have been reported in its subway tunnels. This isn't a surprise to believers in the supernatural. There have been a number of accidents in the Underground over the years, and rumor has it the crews that built the tunnels had to dig through old "plague pits"—mass graves where the bodies of Plague victims were buried. Workmen in outdated clothing appear and disappear in the tunnels, a nun waits for her brother at the Bank station just as she did every evening in life, and travelers on the Bakerloo Line sometimes see the reflection of a ghost sitting next to them late at night when the car is empty.

**WITNESS:** Emily Holborn, resident:

The line I take home from work passes through an old station that hasn't been used since the 1930s. It still has the original tile; it's quite beautiful, really...

Anyway, one night I was coming home a little later than usual. It was past rush hour, and the line I take isn't a very popular route, so there were only a few other passengers on the train. I was the only one in the carriage.

I was reading a book, but as we started approaching the old abandoned station, I got a strange feeling. Something made me look up from my book, and for just a moment, I could swear I saw a man in white overalls with tools in his hand. We made eye contact for just a moment, and he had the saddest look in his eyes. But before I could even gasp in shock, he disappeared into the darkness. I can't explain it, but he just didn't look...real. I know that station isn't open to the public, but even if he did work for transportation, he was wearing a very strange uniform.

It haunted me the whole way home. I couldn't sleep that night. I kept thinking about that sad stare he gave me...

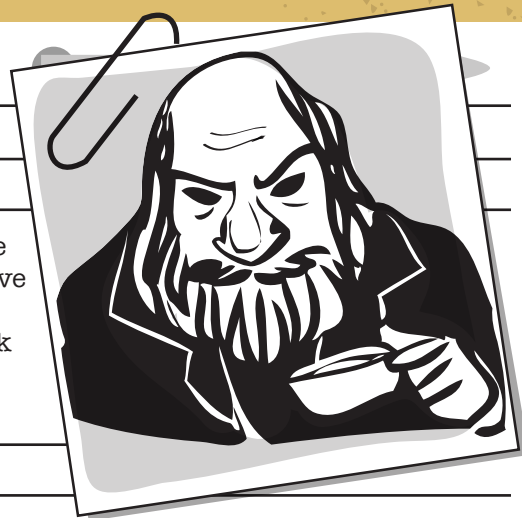
WITNESS: Tim Brantley, tourist:

We were visiting from Canada; it was our first day in town. We're not used to the Underground system, so it took us a while to figure out this map. We got very lost, and finally, late at night on a weeknight, we figured out the right route back to our hotel.

I thought maybe it was because I was tired, but we passed through what looked like an old station...it was like stepping back in time. The signs had such beautiful lettering, and there was intricate tile work. This seemed strange, and even stranger, I thought I saw someone standing way toward the back of the station, in the dark...for just a second, I saw two eyes staring back at me from the shadows.

This all happened in a split second. My wife and kids were fast asleep, and I never told them what I saw.

CONTINUED...



CASE: The Vodníci

LOCATION: Czech Republic

The Vodníci are a breed of underwater ghouls who dress like vagrants and proudly store human souls in cups. After you've been drowned by a Vodník, your soul is eternally doomed to his cup, the creature's one prized possession. When a Vodník isn't busy drowning swimmers, he will often spend his time leisurely loitering and playing cards at the water's edge.

WITNESS: Josef Andrasko, resident:

It was a warm day and I had decided to go for a swim in the lake. I'm a strong swimmer, so I wasn't afraid to go out to the middle of the lake, where it's deepest. I was just enjoying my swim when I felt something grab my ankle and pull me under the water. Down, down, down I went, and the water grew darker and darker. Near the bottom, where the light barely penetrated, I could just make out what was grabbing onto my ankle. It was a little man, dressed in tattered clothing. He had long, wild hair, a ragged scarf that billowed in the water, and clothing full of patches. One hand gripped my ankle, and his other hand held out a cup to me. I could see something writhing and glowing faintly in the cup, but by this time, I was so scared I could hardly think. With all my might, I kicked the cup out of his hand with my free leg, and in his surprise, he let go of my ankle. As he swam away to retrieve his cup, I kicked for the surface as hard as I could. Just at the moment when I thought I would faint, my head broke the surface and I filled my lungs with air.

WITNESS: Alexandra Burak, resident:

I've never told this story to anyone before. When I was a little girl, there was a big pond near our house in the country, which my brother and I would swim in during the summer. One day, I went to the pond with my brother. It was such a nice day, and I sat in a shallow area of the pond, basking in the warmth of the sun with my eyes closed. While I lazily bobbed in the water, I felt something tickle my feet. Thinking it was my brother, I giggled. Then it became stronger, and started pulling harder and harder, until finally I got fed up. "Viktor, stop it!" I cried. Then, behind me I heard, "What?" Viktor was still sitting on the shore. I knew right then and there that I had to get out of the water, quickly! It might have been my imagination, but I'm sure it was a Vodník.

What about Josef's story convinced him that it was a Vodník?

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What is another possible explanation for Alexandra's story?

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CASE: The Winchester Mystery House

LOCATION: California, USA



San Jose's Winchester Mystery House was built and owned by Sarah Winchester, the widow of a famous gun maker. The depressed widow consulted a medium, who claimed that her family and fortune were being haunted by the spirits of people killed by Winchester rifles. The medium advised that the only way to keep the restless spirits at bay was to build them a house. And Sarah did, building a huge mansion full of dead-end staircases, doors and windows that lead to walls, and winding halls to trick the ghosts that plagued her. From 1884 until her death, Winchester used her inheritance to fund the ongoing construction. The house contains 160 rooms, including 40 bedrooms, 2 ballrooms, 47 fireplaces, 2 basements, and 3 elevators.

WITNESS: Sam Hawkins, tourist:

I went on a tour with my family, but got separated from the tour group. I was admiring the view out the window, and when I turned around everyone was gone. I tried to find my way out of the house but nothing was where I remembered it being. I went down a flight of stairs thinking it would lead me to the ground floor, but there was just a dead-end at the bottom. Then I tried a door, but there was a wall on the other side! Every twist and turn just led me deeper and deeper into the house, and I couldn't find my way out. Finally, I collapsed from exhaustion, and I don't know how much time passed before a tour guide found me. It turns out that I had been trapped in the house for three days.

I know people say it's haunted, and several people have told me I was cursed by Sarah Winchester's ghost, but really, I think I just got lost. Simple as that.

WITNESS: Leticia Salazar, tourist:

We were on a tour group, and I'm a photographer, so I brought my professional camera along. I was able to take a few pictures, but the batteries died after a few minutes, even though I just put them in. When I got home and uploaded the shots I was able to get, a bunch of new pictures appeared that I know I did not take...strange, misty forms in the corners of a few of them. So creepy. I'm afraid to even drive by the Winchester House anymore; it just creeps me out.

How did Sam's experience at the Winchester House affect him?

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How did Leticia's experience affect her?

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Great job!

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