



Reconstructing the Scene of the Crime

This MysteryQuest examines documents related to the railway explosion that killed Doukhobor leader, Peter “Lordly” Verigin, in 1924. Students will learn to gather evidence from historical documents to create a diagram of a crime scene.

A critical thinking challenge to accompany

Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History

*Explosion on the Kettle Valley Line:
The Death of Peter Verigin*

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/11/indexen.html>

Author: Sheila Heatherington

Editors: Ruth Sandwell, Dick Holland

Series Editor: Roland Case

*based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC²)
www.tc2.ca*

Ages

14-16

Courses

Canadian history, social studies

Key Topics

- immigrant relations in 20th century Canada
- media bias
- police techniques in the 1920s

Critical Challenge

Using the descriptions provided in documents, draw a diagram of the Verigin railway coach and locate each of the passengers in the appropriate place.

Broad Understanding

Students will learn that historical documents can provide evidence to create a diagram of a crime scene.

Requisite Tools



Background knowledge

- knowledge of the events and social context surrounding the death of Peter Verigin



Criteria for judgment

- criteria for drawing conclusions (e.g., supported by evidence, no alternative explanations)



Critical thinking vocabulary



Thinking strategies

- chart
- diagram



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 their way through the guided instructions and support material found at <http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/11/indexen.html>.

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 directions found on the website is reproduced next to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

Suggested Activities

Introduce the Verigin case

- Using *Introduction* as a guide, explain to students the incident and the challenge that is the focus of their investigation.

INTRODUCTION

Late in the evening of October 28, 1924, Peter Verigin boarded a Canadian Pacific Railway train at Brilliant, British Columbia, the headquarters of the Doukhobor community. About one in the morning a horrific explosion blew away the roof and sides of the coach. Verigin and eight others perished in the explosion, which investigators on the scene quickly concluded was no accident.

Known by the single name "Lordly," Peter Verigin lived like royalty among a group of Russian immigrants to Canada, the Doukhobors, whose motto was "Toil and Peaceful Life." The Doukhobors preached equality and rejected the authority of both Church and State. As a result, they were persecuted in Russia. In 1902 their leader, Peter Verigin, and many of his community came to Canada to take up a new life.

While a number of people and groups were suspected of the crime, no one was brought to trial. Your challenge is to help gather evidence that might eventually help in solving the mystery. More specifically, you are asked to create a diagram of the crime scene showing where Peter Verigin and the other train passengers were sitting when the explosion occurred

- Using *The Task* as a guide, outline the activities that students will undertake.

THE TASK

In this MysteryQuest, you will take on the role of a detective working to uncover evidence about the crime scene. You have been asked to identify all of the people in Railway Coach #1586 at the time of the explosion and to prepare a diagram that indicates the precise location of each passenger.

You will begin by learning more about the events surrounding the explosion. After identifying the names of each passenger in the railway car, you will examine primary documents, looking for clues as to where each was sitting at the time of the explosion. Finally, you will use these clues to prepare a diagram that identifies the precise location of each passenger in the railway car.

Provide background on the incident

- Using *Step 1: Learn about the incident* as a guide, describe to students the events surrounding the explosion.

STEP 1: LEARN ABOUT THE INCIDENT

Before looking for clues as to the location of the various passengers on the train, it will be helpful to learn more about the details of the explosion. Three documents prepared by historians are especially useful:

- an introduction to the explosion;
- a map showing the route the train was travelling;
- and a video simulation of the explosion.

Review each of these documents. They are listed in the *Evidence in the Case* under "Secondary sources."

- From the documents listed in *Evidence in the Case*, you may want to duplicate and distribute to students copies of "*The Explosion: Introduction*" and the map showing the route the train was travelling. Then have students work individually or in pairs to access the video simulation.

EVIDENCE IN THE CASE

Secondary sources

The Explosion: Introduction
The Explosion: 3D Reconstruction
The Explosion: Press accounts
Context: Cast of Characters

Create a passenger list

- Using *Step 2: Identify the passengers in the car* as a guide, explain to students that their first step in recreating the crime scene will be to create a passenger list of people thought to have been in Railway Car #1586 along with Peter Verigin. Duplicate and distribute to students copies of *Cast of Characters*, found at <http://www.canadian-mysteries.ca/sites/verigin/context/castofcharacters/indexen.html>.
- Duplicate and distribute to each student several copies of the chart *Details of People in Car #1586* to record the names of passengers in the car.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE PASSENGERS IN THE CAR

Your next task is to create a list of all the passengers thought to be in Railway Car #1586 along with Peter Verigin. This information can be found in the *Cast of Characters*. Make several copies of the chart *Details of People in Car #1586* and record in the left-hand column of the chart the names of each of the passengers in the car.



MysteryQuest 11 Support Materials 1 (Activity Sheet)

Details of People in Car #1586

Person	Clues about Person's Location in the Train	Information Source

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MysteryQuest 11 – Reconstructing the Scene of the Crime
MysteryQuest 11 Home Website – Explosion on the Kettle Valley Line: The Death of Peter Verigin

Gather information about the passengers

- Using *Step 3: Gather information about the passengers* as a guide, direct students to the six documents found in the Primary Documents section of *Evidence in the Case*. These documents provide clues as to the location of the various passengers in Car #1586.

STEP 3: GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PASSENGERS

In *Evidence in the Case*, under the heading "Primary documents," you will find links to six documents that provide clues as to the location of the various passengers in Car #1586. These documents include three statements offered by witnesses, newspaper articles, and a map of the scene. Review each document for clues and record the relevant information next to the name of the appropriate passenger listed on the charts *Details of People in Car #1586*. As a detective, you should be careful to note as much relevant detail as possible and the source of this information to help you decide where each person was sitting in the train.

EVIDENCE IN THE CASE

Primary documents

Newspaper articles

"A Menace to the District", Grand Forks Gazette, September 14, 1912

"Attempt to Burn Doukhobor School", Grand Forks Gazette, March 30, 1923

Editorial, "Regarding Doukhobors", Oregon Daily Journal, April 15, 1924

Letters

Alex Sherstobetoff and John Koleenoff, Petition of Independent Doukhobors, July 26, 1913

J.A. Fraser, Chief Constable, to A.M. Johnson, Deputy Attorney General of British Columbia, July 22, 1919

"Open Letter from the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood to the B.C. Government", Brilliant, British Columbia, November 5, 1924

Government documents

RCMP Report on Doukhobor Conditions, March 17, 1925

RCMP Report on Doukhobor Conditions, April 11, 1925

Oral history

Nikolai Nevozhonoff, "Doukhobor Community Elders Ordered Schools Burned in 1924", Testimony to the Expanded Kootenay Committee on Intergroup Relations, October 28, 1982

Magazine article

Mrs. W. Garland Foster, "A Doomed Utopia", Saturday Night, June 14, 1924

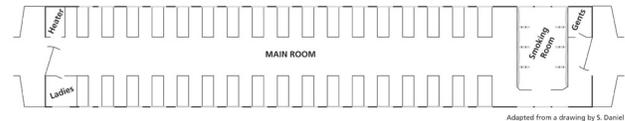
Prepare your drawing

- Using *Step 4: Prepare your drawing* as a guide, duplicate and distribute to students copies of *Diagram of Railroad Coach*. Explain that, using the information they have gathered, they are now ready to draw a detailed diagram of the railway coach and place each of the passengers in the appropriate location.
- You may choose to have students record their information on this sheet and recreate the information on a larger scale using chart paper.

STEP 4: PREPARE YOUR DRAWING

After recording the clues from the six primary documents, you are now ready to draw a detailed diagram of the railway coach and place each of the passengers in the appropriate location. You will find an outline in *Diagram of Railroad Coach* to help you complete this task. You may want to record the information on this sheet or recreate the information on a larger scale using a piece of chart paper.

MysteryQuest 11 Support Materials 2 (Activity Sheet) Diagram of Railroad Coach



Adapted from a drawing by S. Daniel

Evaluation

- Use the rubric *Assessing the Clues and Conclusions* to assess students' conclusions from the clues gathered.



MysteryQuest 11

Evaluation Materials 1 (Rubric)

Assessing the Clues and Conclusions

	Outstanding	Very good	Competent	Satisfactory	In-progress
Identifies relevant clues	For each character, identifies many obvious and less obvious clues.	For each character, identifies many clues including some less obvious ones.	For each character, identifies the most obvious clues.	For most characters, identifies some clues but obvious clues are omitted.	For most characters, identifies no relevant clues.
Offers plausible conclusions	All conclusions are highly plausible and highly justifiable in light of the evidence.	Most conclusions are clearly plausible and justifiable in light of the evidence.	Most conclusions are plausible and somewhat justifiable in light of the evidence.	The majority of conclusions are plausible but many are barely justifiable given the evidence.	Most conclusions are implausible and not justifiable given the evidence.

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Extension

- Invite students to work individually or as a class to pursue the suggested activities listed in *Extension*.

EXTENSION

Gather additional evidence

Find more clues about the location of the passengers in Coach #1586 by reading other statements found in *Investigators' Reports*.

Compare your diagram

In 2005, S. Daniel created a diagram of Coach #1586 based on his own research. Compare your diagram of the crime scene with the one found in the Inquest section. What is different? What is the same?

Learn about possible motives

Read the introductory essays in the Context section to uncover some possible reasons why someone might want to murder Peter Vergin.