



Was Herbert Norman a Spy?

This MysteryQuest examines evidence concerning the suicide death in 1957 of Herbert Norman, following allegations that he was a communist.

A critical thinking challenge to accompany

Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History
Death of a Diplomat: Herbert Norman and the Cold War

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/38/indexen.html>

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

Ages

11 – 14

Courses

Canadian history, social studies, civics, law

Key Topics

- Cold War period
- credible evidence

Critical Challenges

- Determine whether statements about Norman's beliefs, character and actions support or counter the suggestion that his was a spy.
- Assess the likelihood that Norman was involved in spying.

Broad Understanding

- Students will learn that heightened suspicions during the Cold War period caused great hardship to many people.

Requisite Tools

❖ **Background knowledge**

- knowledge of the events and people associated with the accusations against Norman

❖ **Criteria for judgment**

- criteria for relevant evidence (e.g., supports or disputes a theory)

❖ **Critical thinking vocabulary**

- credibility

❖ **Thinking strategies**

- data chart

❖ **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 on [MysteryQuest 38](#).

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

- Invite students to consider an incident in which someone is accused of a crime that he or she denies. If possible use a recent local event as the focus of the discussion. Alternatively, relate the following story. A successful, well-respected businessperson has lived in the community for 25 years, but was born and

raised in another part of the country. As a 14-year-old, he and two other boys were accused of arson but acquitted when it was suspected that the fire was accidental. Recently there have been several incidents of arson in the community. Someone circulated information about the businessperson's teenage troubles and suggested that he could be the arsonist. Because the businessperson is currently having business problems, some people wonder if that might cause him to do things that seem out of character. The rumours about his past are further damaging his business in the community. Discuss whether it is fair to treat the businessperson as a prime suspect and potentially ruin his reputation even if he may later be shown to be innocent.

- Using [Introduction](#) as a guide, explain to students the incident that is the focus of their investigation.

Discuss the challenge

- Using [The Task](#) as a guide, explain that students will work in groups of three to determine whether the evidence suggests that Norman was actually involved in spying or whether he was the victim of a witch-hunt.

Learn about the incident

- Using [Step 1: Learn about the incident](#) as a guide, describe the events surrounding the accusations against Norman and his suicide.
- Distribute the background sheet [Herbert Norman and the Cold War](#) and instruct students to make mental notes of possible evidence for suspecting that Norman may or may not have been a spy.

Gather evidence

- Using [Step 2: Gather evidence](#) as a guide, instruct students to examine the eight documents in [Evidence in the Case](#). Suggest that each student within a group examine all the documents, but focus on one of three dimensions of Norman's life:
 - his beliefs
 - his character
 - his actions.
- Distribute both pages of [Possible Evidence For and Against](#) to each student for use with one of the dimensions. Direct students to focusing initially on the first column on the sheet, and to record ten relevant claims or statements from the documents that apply to their assigned dimension.

Analyze the implications of the information

- Using [Step 3: Analyze the implications of the information](#) as a guide, arrange for students to share their results and, as a group, to discuss the implications of each statement. Suggest that students ask themselves three questions:
 - How might this statement be interpreted in a way that supports the idea that Norman was a spy?

- How might this same statement be interpreted to suggest that Norman was NOT a spy?
 - What questions or concerns about the evidence might influence how they interpret this statement?
- Direct students to record their answers to these questions on the group's copies of the relevant data charts.

Reach a conclusion

- Using [Step 4: Reach a conclusion](#) as a guide, instruct students individually to rate the likelihood that Norman was a spy. Distribute a copy of [Defending my Conclusion](#) to each student to record their rating, identify and explain four supporting reasons, and indicate and counter two opposing reasons.

Share finding with other groups

- Arrange for students to place themselves in a U-shape depending on their conclusion about Norman. Students who are "+2" or "-2" will situate themselves at the opposing tips of the "U." The rest will fill in along the continuum depending on their conclusion. Ask students at various positions to present a few reasons for their conclusion. Encourage students to move positions along the "U" if they hear reasons that cause them to reconsider their initial conclusion about Norman's involvement in spying.

Evaluation

- Use the rubric [Assessing the Evidence](#) to evaluate how well students were able to locate relevant statements in the documents and explain their possible implications for the spy theory.
- Use the rubric [Assessing the Conclusion and Justification](#) to evaluate how well students were able to offer and justify a plausible conclusion about the likelihood that Norman was a spy.

Extension

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