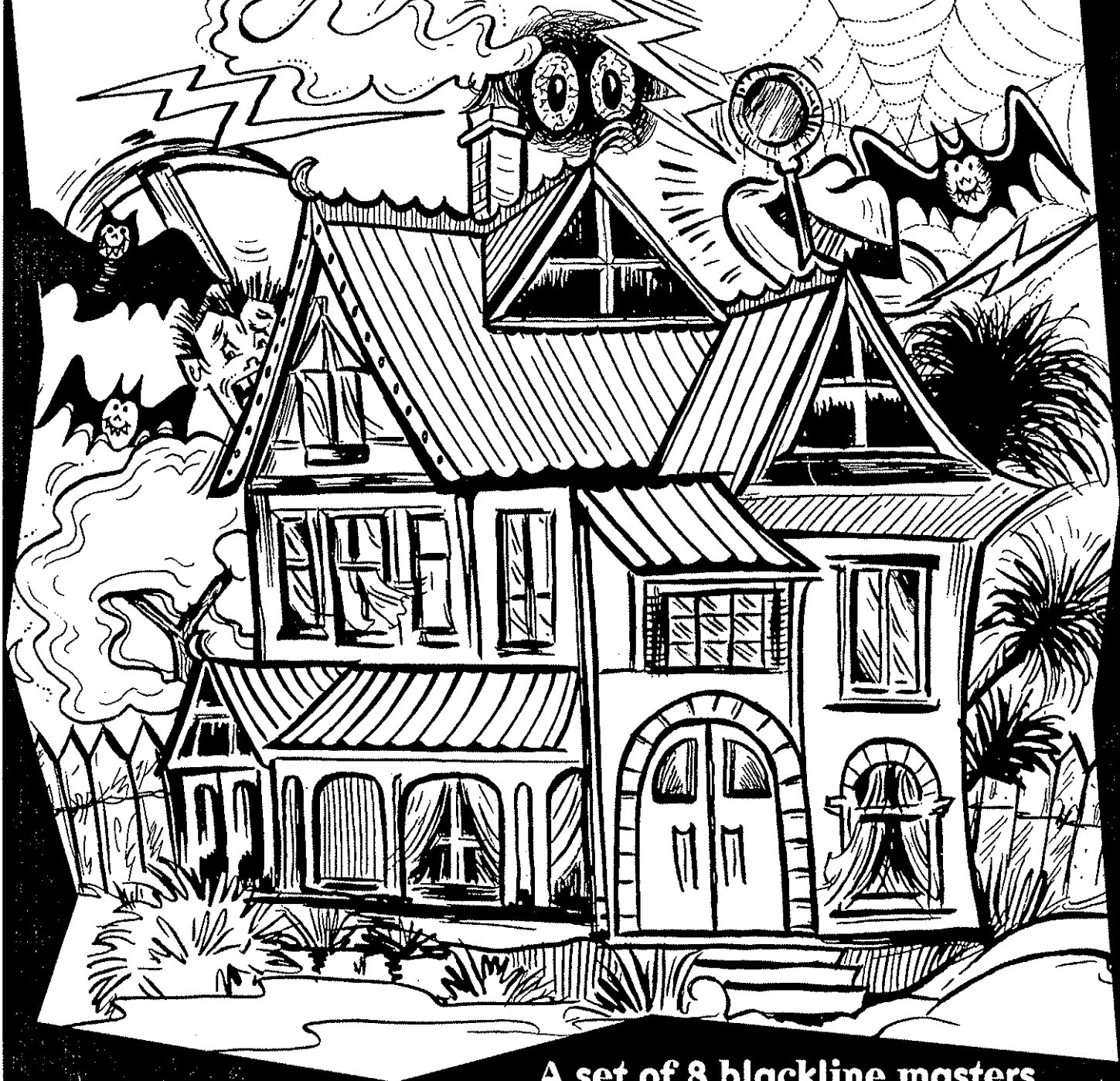


MYSTERY GENRE



A set of 8 blackline masters

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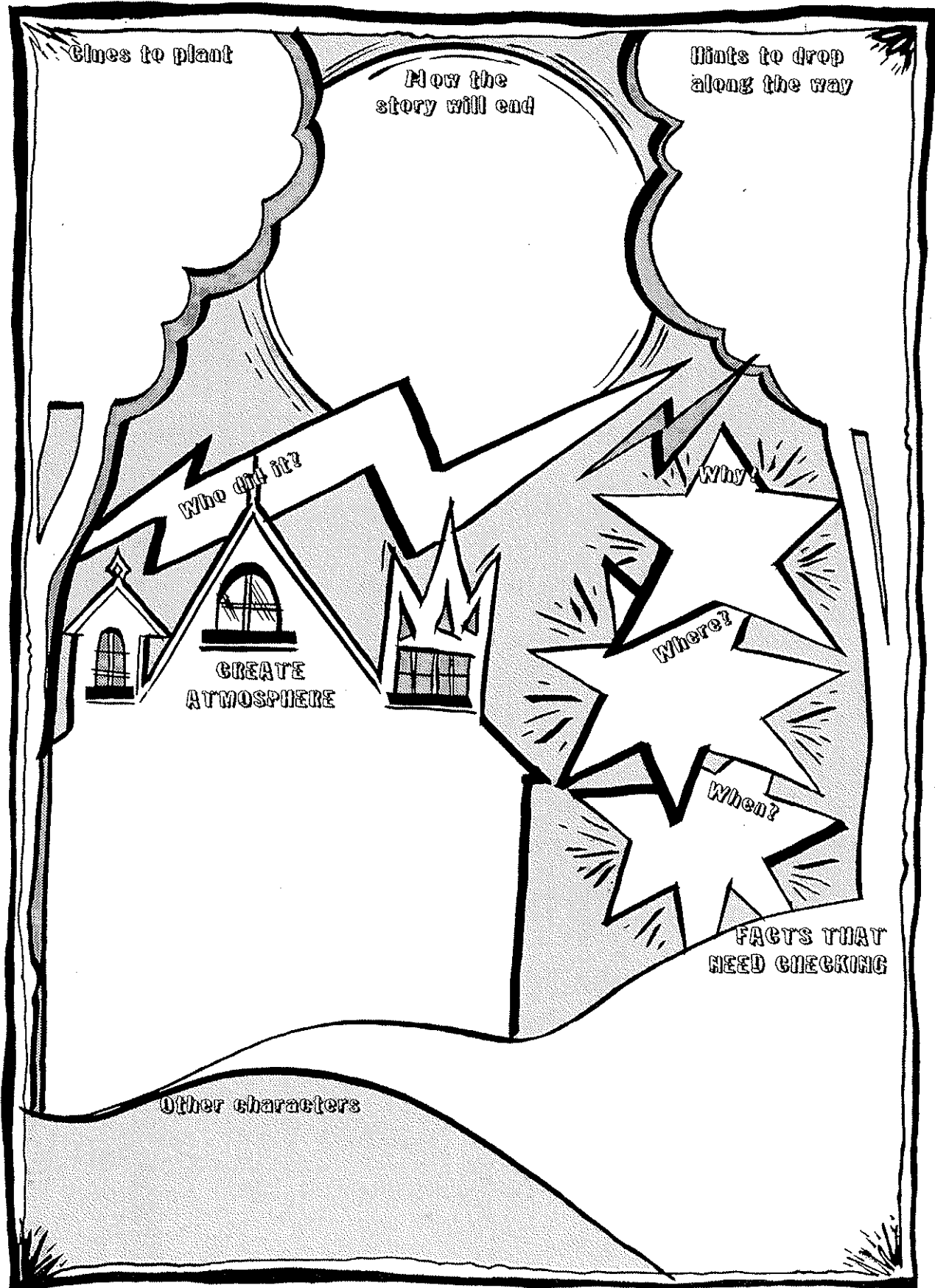
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Getting Away with Murder!

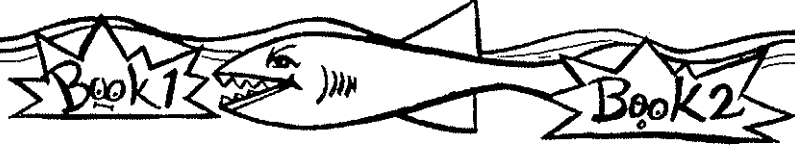
To write a mystery story is not as simple as it may seem. Often the plot gets thicker and thicker while an ending is nowhere in sight! One way to avoid this is to begin with an ending, and then to plot out a story map like the one below.



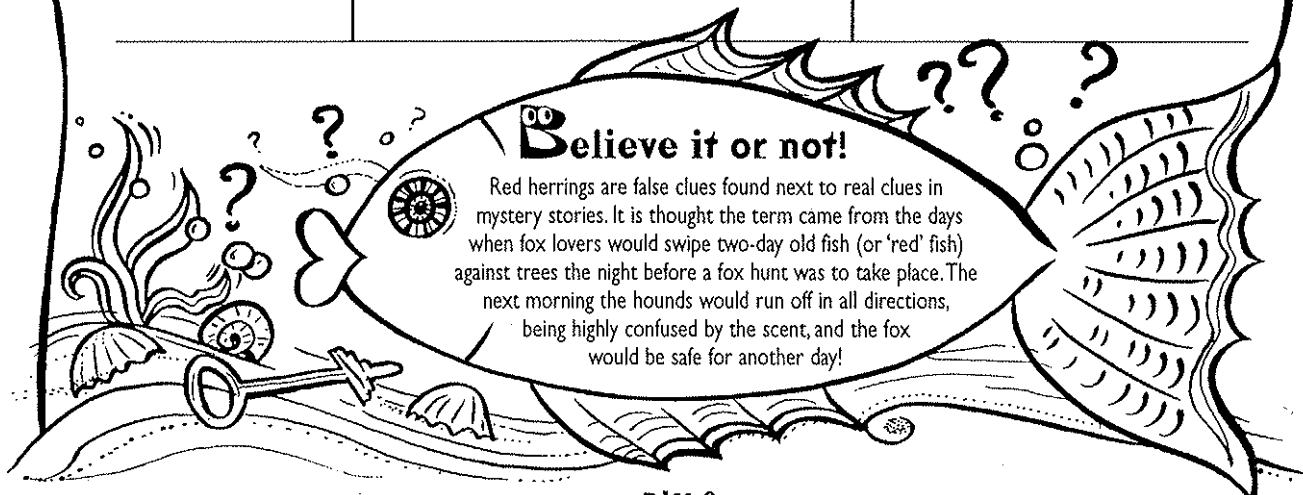
Red Herrings, Whodunnit and All That Stuff!

Some of the most popular mystery series have been written for children, eg the *Nancy Drew*, *Hardy Boys*, *Encyclopedia Brown*, *Teen Power Inc*, *Baby-sitters* and *Goosebumps* series. Look at mystery stories you have read and are reading.

Use the table below to enter comments in order to compare two of them. What essential elements do they have in common? How do they differ?



Title		
Author		
Type of mystery		
Key characters		
Victim		
Villain		
Clues		
Red herrings		
Setting		
What essential elements do they have in common?		
How do they differ?		
Rating out of 10		
Reasons		

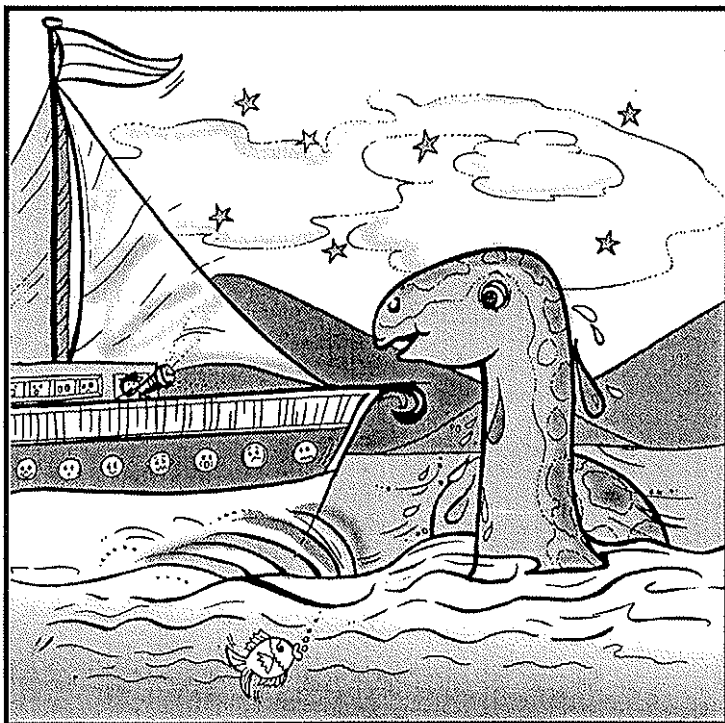


Believe it or not!

Red herrings are false clues found next to real clues in mystery stories. It is thought the term came from the days when fox lovers would swipe two-day old fish (or 'red' fish) against trees the night before a fox hunt was to take place. The next morning the hounds would run off in all directions, being highly confused by the scent, and the fox would be safe for another day!

Drumnadrochit TRIBUNE!

A new Loch Ness mystery has unfolded with the discovery of a huge underwater cavern which has been aptly named 'Nessie's Lair'!



Auxiliary coastguard and local businessman, George Edwards, made a spectacular find whilst on a training exercise on the Loch. The depth of the Loch is around 230 m deep, but as George made a circular manoeuvre with his boat he got a reading of 250 m on his sonar equipment.

George, who over the years has seen many strange shapes on the Loch, has been a tour boat operator in the area for over 12 years. Being a firm 'Nessie' (Loch Ness Monster) believer, George says there must be more than one creature in the Loch and this cavern could lead to a network of caves. He feels the time has come to investigate the underwater caves and has been contacted by a North Sea oil company offering equipment and experts to seek out 'Nessie's Lair'.

The real life mystery of the Loch Ness Monster has been a source of fascination for many. Does it really exist? Is there more than one? Using George Edwards' discovery above, you could write a mystery story based at the Loch. Research your topic. You might also like to use some of the guidelines outlined on BLM 1 and BLM 2 to map out your story first.

Other real-life mysteries surround the Bermuda Triangle, the *Mary Celeste*, crop circles, *The Flying Dutchman*, and yeti. Prepare a three-minute speech on one or more of these to share with your class.



Death by Dust Jacket!

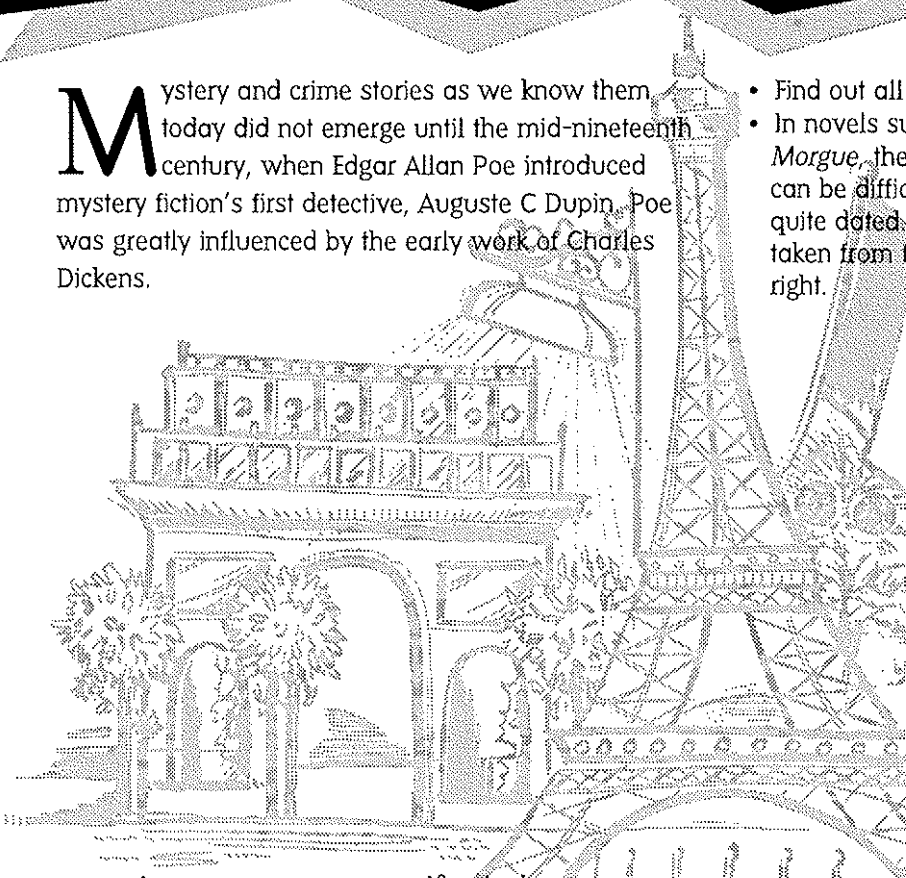
Design a dust jacket and write a back-cover blurb for a mystery you have read, or for a mystery suggested by the following title: *Mystery on Devil Island*. Look at existing covers of mystery stories for ideas. You might like to use different design approaches, eg collage, painting, photographs.

The form consists of a large outer rectangle with a solid border. A dashed horizontal line is positioned approximately one-fifth of the way down from the top. Another dashed horizontal line is positioned approximately one-fifth of the way up from the bottom. In the lower half of the page, centered horizontally, there is a smaller rectangle with a solid border, intended for a back-cover blurb.

Father of the Mystery Story!

Mystery and crime stories as we know them today did not emerge until the mid-nineteenth century, when Edgar Allan Poe introduced mystery fiction's first detective, Auguste C Dupin. Poe was greatly influenced by the early work of Charles Dickens.

- Find out all you can about these two great writers.
- In novels such as Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, the language used creates atmosphere but can be difficult for us to read today, as it seems quite dated. Try to match the vocabulary list below, taken from this novel, to the word meanings at their right.



contention	argument, strife, rivalry
Napoleons	outward appearance, mere show
aperture	effort, attempt
excoriations	drew out
semblance	French coinage
transpired	happened, took place
elicited	French police officer
snuff	tobacco ground to a powder
endeavour	slit, crack, or other opening
gendarme	places where skin has been rubbed or stripped off
bayonet	strangle, choke
garret	praise highly
extol	way out, exit
corroborate	attic
expostulate	person committing a crime
egress	to argue with another's actions or intentions
depose	declare or testify under oath
throttle	daggerlike weapon attached to a rifle
perpetrator	sudden and violent fit, action or emotion
soliloquy	objection, protest
remonstrance	the act of talking to oneself
denizens	people who live in a particular place
prodigious	extraordinary in size, amount, extent, degree, force
trellis	crossed strips of metal or wood, with spaces in
paroxysm	between, used as a screen or support

In The Murders in the Rue Morgue, two gruesome murders have been committed. A mother and daughter lie dead. Poe's detective, M Auguste Dupin, learns of the murders through the newspaper report which tells how the murderer's voice was heard but it was not in a language that any of the people who heard it could understand. Those who report hearing the voice are of different nationalities. Furthermore, when Dupin visits the scene of the crime, the doors have been locked from the inside and the windows nailed shut. There seems to be no way the murderer could have escaped. What do you think happened? Give a short account, using some vocabulary from the list. Now read the story in class and find out.



Formula-driven Mystery!

Our fascination with mystery and crime can be traced back to ancient Greece, where playwrights like Sophocles and Euripides enthralled locals with their plays combining mystery and drama. In first century BC Rome, Cicero argued passionately in court in defence of accused criminals, captivating Romans with his speeches. While courtroom dramas still enthral readers, mysteries have taken other forms.

But what exactly makes a good mystery? Many mystery stories, in fact, are written to a formula—especially mystery series. See if you can recognise any of the following elements in the titles you have read and write them down next to the points they match. When you have finished, try writing a mystery to the formula!

The detective:

- is a loner, thus allowing them to be objective.
- takes risks.
- is curious and already has a job/career which makes them naturally curious, eg journalist, scientist, researcher, librarian, private investigator.
- is in a job which allows them the time and money to pursue solving the puzzle at hand.
- is physically strong.
- has hobbies or skills that help them solve clues, eg is a computer whiz, understands other languages.
- has friends in the right places, eg government, the police, a hospital.
- has a sense of morality.
- is intelligent.

The victim is:

- highly unlikeable so that the reader concentrates only on the puzzle at hand.
- likeable but not too well-known so that the reader does not waste time mourning their passing.
- never a child.

The villain is:

- intelligent enough to present a worthy puzzle to solve.
- either amoral, believing rules are made for others and they can do as they please, eg a serial killer, OR immoral, knowing what they do is wrong but doing it anyway.
- someone with an overriding ego, eg they may appear meek and mild but they are fastidious about their appearance or themselves in some way.

Clues

- The real clues are often given right at the beginning of a story, when most readers miss them because they are concentrating on who the characters are and what the setting is.
- Clues are then scattered through the story so that the detective looks like they are getting somewhere.
- The best place to put a clue is next to a red herring!

Red herrings:

- are false clues that stand out and are often placed next to less noticeable real clues.
- should not be overused, as everything must be explained to the reader's satisfaction by the end of the story.

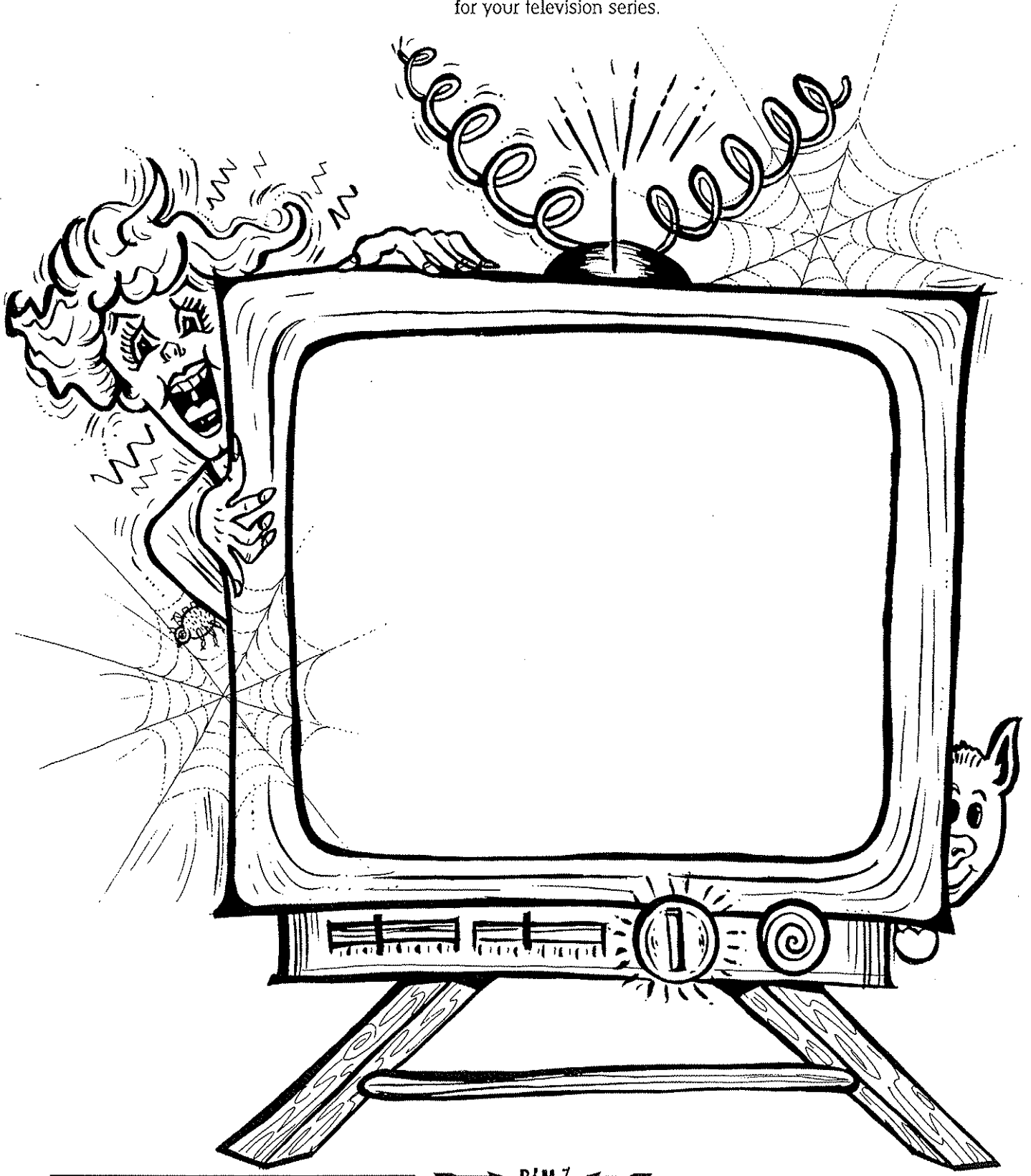
The setting can be

- a real or imagined geographical territory.
- a closed physical environment, eg a train, aeroplane, cruise ship.
- a closed specialised field, eg if only seven people in a city could have committed the crime because of their knowledge of a specialised field.

Mystery TV!

The most successful media for the mystery genre has proved to be television. The longest running mystery drama in television history began in 1984, with the introduction of Jessica Fletcher in *Murder She Wrote*, and ran for 12 years.

- Create an outline for a pilot series of mystery stories for children's television. Remember: you are trying to sell the idea to a media mogul, so make your outline persuasive!
- You might like to write a script and rehearse it with some of your friends, in order to dramatise an episode for your television series.



It's a Mystery to Me!

Conduct a survey to find out what makes a good mystery. Ask parents, relatives, friends and neighbours to choose their favourite mysteries from the book and television titles below. Write down what it is they like so much about them and present your findings to make a class list of what makes a great mystery.

Sherlock Holmes

Agatha Christie

Perry Mason

Charlie Chan

Murder She Wrote

The Saint

Nancy Drew

Hardy Boys

Encyclopedia Brown

Goosebumps

Babysitters

Columbo

Kojak

Hill Street Blues

NYPD Blues

Law and Order

X-Files

Other